



Review Of The Work Done By Men Of The
ASSAM RIFLES
During
The
Earthquake, 15th. August, 1950,
And Floods.

Issued by
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GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SHILLONG

November 22, 1951.

The Assam Rifles have an uninterrupted record of 116 years of distinguished service in the cause of peace and preservation of law and order. A fine reputation has been built up for their name by the valour and sacrifice of brave men during all these years. That reputation is a trust handed down by those brave men to their successors in arms who in turn have striven not only to keep that reputation untarnished but to throw fresh lustre on it. Probably no event brought out the splendid qualities of the officers and men of the Assam Rifles more prominently before the outside world than did the Great Earthquake of August 1950. The Assam Rifles are essentially a force for maintaining law and order in the frontier hill areas of the north east corner of India. But they have transformed themselves more than once, and at no notice, into an efficient military force playing a notable role in the wars to which India has had to be a party. The Great Earthquake of 1950 showed that the Assam Rifles were not only an armed force for civil or military purposes but they constituted a well disciplined volunteer corps for the

By their deeds, their courage, sacrifice and devotion for the people of Assam for their lives and property in the line of exhibition, the Assam Rifles have won fresh laurels in a new field of service. This publication contains a very brief narrative of the significant activities of the Assam Rifles during the last Emergency and the consequent illness. Despite its brevity it can give the reader a glimpse of what the Assam Rifles wrought while the crisis lasted. The perusal of these pages should be a source of inspiration to those who, in the coming years, will fill their ranks. It is my wish, hope and prayer that the bright fame of the Assam Rifles may ever remain untarnished by a single lapse by officer or soldier and that the proud heritage of the past may receive fresh accessions by new acts of valour, sacrifice and service in military, civil and humanitarian fields. And to those whose names are recorded in this volume and to those at their head, I extend my heartiest congratulations on their achievements.

¹
Jairamdas Doulatram
(Jairamdas Doulatram)



Sj. Jairamdas Doulatram, Governor of Assam, is giving a hearty send-off to Pandit Nehru at the Kahikuchi airfield on the eve of his departure to Delhi after a three day tour of the quake affected areas of Assam.

[Extract from the Statement of the Hon'ble Chief Minister on the havoc and damage caused by the recent earthquake and floods in Assam and the relief measures taken by Government on 30th September, 1950.]

"The splendid work of the Assam Rifles during this emergency deserves mention. For days after the earthquake, there was no news about the three Assam Rifles and Military parties marooned in the Lohit Valley track at the time of the disaster, and of those who were standing guard at some of the remote outposts near our borders. It was due to the heroism of the Officer-in-charge of our last outpost at Walong in the Lohit Valley and his men, that contact was at last established with these marooned parties, as also with Mr. Kingdon-Ward, the famous botanist-cum-explorer, who was trekking near the Tibetan border at the time of the earthquake. The full story of the thrilling and daring adventures of the men of the Assam Rifles in rescuing their comrades from the face of danger, still remains to be told. It is through the efforts of the men of the Assam Rifles that the road from Sadiya to Nizamghat in the Mishmi Hills, and from Saikhowaghat to Dholla could be restored so quickly. They have also been busy making an embankment to divert the Dihang channel, preparing dropping zones, repairing the landing ground near Sadiya, the Pasighat-Kobo Road, the Pasighat-Pangin Road and the various tribal tracks in the interior of the Abor and Mishmi Hills district, so that the tribal people can once again move in safety to the district and subdivisional headquarters for procuring their necessities of life. A landing ground near Pasighat prepared by the men is nearing completion, and in a few days' time it is expected that small planes will be able to land there. In the North Lakhimpur subdivision, in addition to assisting in the restoration of communications in the worst affected areas, a party of Assam Rifles, 150 strong, has started constructing bashas for housing the flood-

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND TO THE GREAT ASSAM EARTHQUAKE OF 1950.

BY
F KINGDON-WARD

THE Lohit river rises on the deeply eroded outer rim of the Tibetan plateau, and flows southwards for about 150 miles before turning abruptly westwards at Minzong, to reach the plains of Assam. Thus it is convenient to divide the course of the Lohit into four sections which, starting from the source and working downstream, may be described thus :

- (i) from the sources to the junction of the eastern and western branches at Rima (about 130 miles) ;
 - (ii) from Rima to Minzong (about 60 miles) ;
 - (iii) from Minzong to the edge of the plains above Teju (40 miles) ;
 - (iv) the plains section from Teju to Kobo (70 miles).
- Ignoring section (i), with which we are not here concerned, we will refer to the others as the middle, lower, and plains section respectively.

For all but 50 of its 300 miles, it is completely shut in by high mountains, which rise abruptly from the edge of the plain, and quickly reach altitudes of 15,000 feet or more. Through these high ranges the river has cut a deep gorge, the sharp knee-bend at Minzong separating not only the ice-worn valley from the water-worn valley below, but also the harsh, arid pine-clad gorge from the softly rounded jungle-clad slopes of the lower gorge, where the river is making more directly towards the plain.

The two most noticeable features of the Mishmi Hills, which here screen the escarpment of the Tibetan plateau, are the steepness of the slopes, and the heavy precipitation throughout

the year—prolonged summer rain and heavy winter snow, and it is through this screen of high densely forested hills that the Lohit has cut its gorge. If the main gorge itself is steep flanked what must be said of the principal affluents—the Tidding, Delei, Da, Yeak and others.

The lower section of the Lohit gives one no clue to the appearance of the middle section from the bend at Minzong to Rima. Here the cliffs on either side are often vertical (or nearly so) for several thousand feet. Enormous accumulations of gravel mixed with boulders from broad or narrow terraces between the river and the foot of the cliffs. (There appear to be three main terraces superimposed corresponding with three levels of the river but it rarely happens that all three can be recognised at any one spot.) This middle section where for 3000 or 4000 feet above the river pine forest is dominant has for many years been subject to forest fires deliberately started in the spring.

At Rima the arid gorge opens out into a sort of basin both the river itself and the valley widening considerably. There are—or were—two small islands covered with pine trees in the river. On either side the slopes rise steeply and soon reach 15,000 feet. On the Burma frontier to the east within 25 miles is a cluster of peaks which rise to over 19,000 feet.

It is against this background that the great earthquake of the 15th August 1950 must be seen. It came shortly after dark with the unexpectedness of a shooting star and was felt at Rima not as a swaying or even as a shaking motion but as a terrible hammering on the crust of the earth from below—a thunderous pounding as though some giant were trying to smash in the bottom of the basin and indeed the feeling we had throughout the five minutes it lasted was that the crust on which we lay was really quite thin and that it would immediately crack break up and let us fall through into the bowels of the earth. At the epicentre of such a convulsion the word earthquake conveys quite a false impression.

The effect on the mountains which are here composed of granite and gneiss was terrific. Rocks roared down all round whole mountain sides were stripped off and with their covering of forest hurled into the gorge. Probably every tributary of the Lohit from the source of the river downwards was choked by rock avalanches if not immediately then later.



A big ship between Theichang, Hanyang



Looking up the Loh t from Walong after the earthquake

There are several points which are worth noting. In the first place, the earthquake came at the exact moment when it could do the least damage **at the moment**. The rains were not yet over, and the affluents, as well as the Lohit itself, held sufficient water to force their way through many small blocks. The snow, however, was all melted (except, of course, permanent snow on the highest ranges), so that even when affluents were badly blocked, there was no rapid formation of overwhelming lakes, followed by heavy scouring of channels by sudden flood. These things did occur (e.g. in the Tidding, and further round the head of the Assam Valley, in the Dibang, Siang, and Subansiri); but they would have been far worse if there had been a progressive rise in these rivers as happens in April or May.

Again, the vegetation was at its maximum growth, and would tend to hold the earth together and blanket the shock—though this was so terrific it tossed the forest aside as though it were a mere surface froth. Still, there can be little doubt that the vegetation did have some beneficial effect. Moreover, had it been midwinter, when the upper courses of the affluents were frozen, the avalanches would have been cemented by ice, forming far stronger barriers, and the devastation when the dams burst in the spring would have been more terrible.

The journey from Rima to Walong showed what had befallen the track—never an easy one—up the Lohit gorge. Between Walong and Minzong several buttresses are traversed, and under the conditions created by slips and rock avalanches, these were highly dangerous to cross. But there was no way round.

Below Minzong I hoped that the dense jungle would have knitted the mountains together more securely. The rock, too—mainly schist and slate—might have proved less brittle. But it was not so, and the ruin here was as complete as it was elsewhere.

One cannot avoid the conclusion, however, that though the short-term results of the earthquake were less severe (owing to the season) than they might otherwise have been, the long-term damage may be more severe. Very many years must pass before the gigantic slips in the Lohit valley are again concealed by forest. What happened beyond Rima, we may never know.

INTRODUCTORY.

IN the very throes of celebrating the third anniversary of Independence Day, Assam was rocked by one of the most severe earthquake in living memory. About 7-45 p.m. on the 15th August, 1950, those of us in Shillong were astounded by the severe shock which lasted for several minutes. This was followed by a further shock in the early hours of the morning of the 16th August and by another at 10-30 p.m. that night.

From the intensity of the shocks felt in Shillong it was quite apparent that the rest of Assam would surely have been similarly affected. Therefore, the next few days were ones of extreme anxiety while we waited for reports to come in by wireless from the Headquarters of our 5 Battalions and our far-flung Outposts. As news continued to come through it was evident that Sadiya and the whole of the North East Frontier had experienced the worst shocks, whilst Lokra, in the Balipara Frontier Tract, had also suffered to a lesser degree. Reports from the remaining three Battalions showed that, while moderate shocks were felt, there was no damage worth considering.

In Sadiya itself, the earthquake tremors raced through the centre of the Assam Rifles Lines, completely destroying five 'kutchas' barracks, severely cracking three brick barracks and slightly damaging two more. The family quarters and their cook houses were all badly cracked, rendering most of the families without shelter. In addition to this, large cracks and fissures opened up, causing water and sand to gush out of the earth with great violence and a terrifying noise. It was not surprising, therefore, that virtual panic broke out amongst the 200 women and children, all of whom were rushing about the

Lines in the dark not knowing where to go to avoid this alarming rush of water coming from the bowels of the earth. With great presence of mind the Commandant, Lt.-Colonel Sandhu, Major Sharma and other officers and J.C.Os of the 2nd Battalion were able to collect the terrified women and children and herd them together in one of the undamaged Drill Sheds, where they were given shelter for the night.

It was not until the next morning that the full extent of the damage done could really be seen. The area in and around Sadiya was severely shaken, which resulted in the Ferry Ghat at Saikhowa being completely destroyed. The Ghat on the Sadiya bank was very shortly afterwards completely washed away by floods, thereby cutting Sadiya off from Lower Assam.

Another serious result of the earthquake was a temporary shortage of pure drinking water, due to the fact that all the tube wells in the Lines were completely ruined owing to the sand gushing up through them.

The National Highway, at a point about 20 miles from Dibrugarh, was submerged for a distance of 2 to 3 miles, and the railway line from Tinsukia to Saikhowa was badly damaged causing further dislocation of traffic by road and rail. Further reports from the surrounding areas showed that most of the bridges on the roads in that area had collapsed.

The early morning of the 16th August found every available man and recruit at Battalion Headquarters busily engaged in re-constructing the kutchra barracks that had fallen down and in building temporary basha hutments for the accommodation of the families. In addition to this, one Platoon was put on to the Sadiya/Nizamghat road to fill in all cracks and repair the bridges and another Platoon was put on the road Sadiya/Tezu for similar work.

Reports now kept coming in from the various outposts. Every outpost in the N.E.F.A. reported severe shocks with varying degrees of damage to Assam Rifles buildings. The most alarming reports, however, came from Walong, near the Tibetan border. A party of one section Assam Rifles personnel with Captain Sailo, the A.P.O., Lohit Valley, narrowly missed being completely buried under a large landslide whilst on their way to Rima, on the Tibetan border. With the exception of three local porters, who were buried and killed, the rest managed to

escaped and all the rest were killed. The bodies of the dead were buried under a pile of stones. The party was received by Hav. Padam Bora. He had a party of 10 Assam Rifles from Walong. The party was taken to a place called Sadiya and 5 Assam personnel were left there. The party was then taken to Sadiya. Major Roy and Captain () were sent to Walong. The party was then taken to Changwint. The party was then taken to Sadiya. There was a wire-... about any news of this... The first news of their safety reached... A party consisting of Hav. Pakal Singh Bora and 7 Assam Rifles had proceeded to patrol the Diphu Pass, on the Burma border and no news of this party was received until 5th September. A separate account of the experiences of these three parties is given elsewhere.

While our attention was mainly concentrated on Sadiya and the N.E. Frontier, more alarming reports were coming in from North Lakhimpur, informing us of the very serious floods in the Subansiri Basin, which was a direct result of the earthquake. For hundred of miles along the Himalayas, whole mountain sides had collapsed bringing with them vast quantities of forest and earth. This had the effect of blocking up the head waters of numerous rivers and when these temporary dams burst the water came rushing down with great force, sometimes as a wall of water to a height of 15 to 20 feet, washing away entire villages. The death roll in the Subansiri area was estimated at over 600.

Before the Assam Rifles, Army and Police were able to render any assistance, two stalwart young tea planters, Mr. Strang and Mr. Clarkson, were already flying several sorties a day dropping cooked food and rations on the marooned villagers. One particular instance is worthy of note. Mr. Strang, flying low over the area of the village of Divpai, had noticed that the whole village was swept away by floods and in circling around the nearby hills had spotted a large collection of villagers in the jungle in the foot hills. He attempted to drop rations for them, but, as much of these were lost he managed, by hand signals, to bring this party of refugees to a river bank and dropped further rations for them, which they were able to collect. On Strang's information another young tea planter,



Mr. Castle, effected, single handed and at great risk by means of an out-board engine dug-out, the rescue of the whole party of 160 which took him several days to complete. It was learnt later that 183 persons from Divpai village had been drowned.

Within a few days of the news of the floods several Relief Societies, such as the Marwan Relief Society, the Kashi Bishwa Nath Sewa Samiti, both from Calcutta, and the Ramkrishna Mission had proceeded to North Lakhimpur and Pathalipam and were busily engaged in relief work, in co-operation with local Congress workers.

At an Emergency Council Meeting held at Government House, Shillong, His Excellency the Governor of Assam, had decided to send a composite party of Assam Rifles, Army and Police to Pathalipam, to help in rescuing marooned villagers and distributing rations, which were now being dropped by air. Captain Limbu, of the 5th Battalion Assam Rifles, was detailed to accompany this party, which was commanded by Captain Charan Singh, of the Jat Regiment. Captain Limbu's work in Baligaon, on the East Bank of the Subansiri river, deserves especial praise. At great personal risk he took a small party across the turbulent Subansiri and started rescue operations on the East bank. The same officer, while crossing and re-crossing the Subansiri, had a miraculous escape from drowning when his boat capsized and he was carried down swiftly for a hundred yards or so before being rescued. His complete disregard for his personal safety and his keen sense of duty is an inspiration to all of us in the Assam Rifles.

With the hundreds of refugees now being collected, it was decided to send a further 150 men of the 5th Battalion Assam Rifles under Lt.-Col. Sharma, the Commandant, to Pathalipam to start immediate construction of bashas for the homeless. These men remained there for over two and a half months and had constructed bashas for over 200 refugees, in addition to building accommodation for the milk distributing centre at Ananda Bazar and bashas for visiting officers. One Platoon of this party then moved over to Baligaon, on the east bank of the Subansiri, and commenced building bashas on that side.

The men of the 5th Battalion Assam Rifles at Lokra were likewise kept very busy from the day after the Earthquake onwards.

The story of the work done by the men of the 2nd and 5th Battalion is given in the succeeding Chapters.

While this report is chiefly concerned with the work done by the men of the Assam Rifles, one cannot allow the excellent work done by the I.A.F. to go unmentioned. Sqd Ldr. Malse and his gallant men have flown hundreds of sorties, mostly through the worst of the monsoon weather and taking tremendous risks, to drop food, clothing and other necessities for the marooned peoples, thus bringing succour to many thousands.

There have been many calls on the other three Battalions of the Assam Rifles to help out with the supply of wireless sets, picks, shovels, daos, khukries etc. etc., all of which have been cheerfully and readily forthcoming. All men of the Assam Rifles have now contributed one day's rations which have been collected and sent to the 2nd Battalion at Sadiva, where the problem of ration supplies became most acute.

As a further proof of the loyalty and camaraderie of the Assam Rifles, the Inspector General, Assam Rifles has been proud to hand over a sum of Rs. 24,000 to His Excellency the Governor of Assam for His Excellency's Earthquake Relief Fund, being the amounts collected through the Inspector General of Assam Rifles and from all the five Battalions. Out of this total, His Excellency had kindly re-granted a sum of Rs. 22,688/12/- which has been allocated to the 2nd and 5th Battalions for repair of the damaged buildings and other relief measures to personnel of these Battalions.



CHAPTER I.

REPORT BY L. R. SAILO, A.P.O.

ON the 14th August, 1950, eve of Indian Independence, my reconnaissance party, after a strenuous march of 130 miles in mid-monsoon weather through the most difficult Frontier Tract of Assam, moved out from our last Military Outpost, Walong, which is approximately 20 miles from the famous Mc MOHAN LINE, the boundary line between India and Tibet.

The main object of my party was to ensure the safety and security of our border by visiting and contacting our neighbouring State's officials on the spot. A few days before my party proceeded to the Tibet border I sent out from WALONG Outpost one Patrolling Party consisting of one senior Assam Rifles Non-Commissioned Officer and seven other Ranks to a mountain pass known as the DIPHU LA, situated at the head of the DI CHU Valley at an elevation of 14280 feet from mean sea level on our immediate border with Burma.

My party (which was made as small as possible, due to the difficulty of obtaining local porters) consisted of myself and two followers, Dr. M. C. Goswami, Medical Officer of WALONG Outpost and his medical Orderly, one section of Assam Rifles under the command of Subedar K. B. Gurung, my Tibetan Interpreter Mr. T. Tsering, my Office Assistant Mr. D. N. Gogoi, Mishmi Political Jamadar YALUM TAUSIT, and 40 porters with our seven days' rations and other effects.

After two days' hard march in the midst of rain, we arrived at the border. Although there were no clear landmarks like boundary pillars, yet it was not very difficult to locate the boundary line with the help of a quarter-inch map which I had in my possession. The day we arrived at the boundary being Indian Independence Day, I had a particular desire to camp exactly on the famous LINE, and to put a mark on a big stone

in remembrance of our arrival there on the auspicious day, and also partly to serve as a landmark for our future guidance. Accordingly, I chose a camp site quite close to a row of three tall pine trees running almost in line with the stone I selected. While the party was busy erecting our temporary camp, I was also fully engaged in writing on the surface of the stone the proposed inscription and a picture of the Indian National Flag, using a piece of charcoal, to enable carving work to be done later by means of pointed khukries. About 25 yds. behind our camp was a bulging cliff which formed part of a craggy ridge about 9000 feet high, running roughly from North to South.

The day was hot and the Valley wind was unusually strong. A cup of tea after a hard day's work was extremely welcome.

In the afternoon two Tibetan Officials whom we wanted to meet came riding to our newly erected camp, and we discussed freely all matters relating to our border security. Our meeting with them was as cordial and pleasant as could be desired. We entertained our distinguished visitors as much as we could, and gave them some political presents, such as silk clothes cigarettes, tea, etc. In return they gave us plenty of eggs and other food-stuffs, and rode back to their homes in the evening. We were very pleased to learn that there was no immediate danger to our Tibetan Frontier along the Lohit Valley.

To enable the party to arrange a humble celebration of the happy occasion, I requested the local Headmen to supply us on payment whatever was available from their villages. Unfortunately, nothing could be obtained except a small quantity of rice-beer which was equally distributed among all the members of the party.

About 7-30 p.m. we all assembled in one spot. A toast was proposed to "The Dominion of India" and all of us raised our cups and cheered with "JAI HIND". While chatting and talking merrily about the BIG DAY and our hard day's journey, occasionally expressing our great desire to celebrate it in a grander fashion, we suddenly heard a great rumbling noise which was immediately followed by a terrible shaking of the earth, and the cracking and falling of gigantic masses of rock from above on to our camp. This terrific noise, accompanied by a very strong wind with a peculiar smell, filled the whole atmosphere in a few seconds. Without losing a second and with a shout from the

Subedar Saheb of "ALL DOWNWARDS". everybody rolled down towards the bank of the Lohit, partly carried along by the strong dust wind and followed by the thundering noise of boulders falling behind us. It was like a heavy bombardment or great artillery barrage on our position. The 30 feet high embankment of the Lohit river was no longer an obstacle to our downward rush to reach the river bank, in the midst of rolling boulders and a thick suffocating dust. Bumping against moving boulders in the darkness, and many of us crying and shouting for help, we headed towards the beach, where our Lama porters had their half-extinguished fire still burning. Having stopped for a minute to check the missing members, I shouted. "Where is the Subedar Saheb? Where is so-and-so?" Hearing my voice, Mr. Tsering answered and thanked God for my safety. Meantime Subedar Gurung appeared, followed by two injured persons crawling towards the fire, one of whom was my loyal Naga servant, and the other a Rifleman of our party.

Finding that the place was not safe at all, and it was impossible to take a proper roll-call of the party, we hurriedly moved up to some flat ground about 200 feet from the beach to the Tibetan Customs hut, carrying the wounded persons through uprooted trees and several other obstacles on the way. Certain members of the party who first climbed up to the hut helped us with bamboo torches and thus enabled us to reach the hut which we thought to be a safe place. The immediate course taken by the party was a wise one, otherwise more members would have been injured or buried if we had tarried longer in our first rendezvous on the bank of the river. On arrival at the Tibetan hut I found that my throat was awfully dry and my nostrils were half blocked by the dust. I was ready to vomit and tried hard to control myself and cheer the rest of the party, but could hardly speak a word for a few seconds.

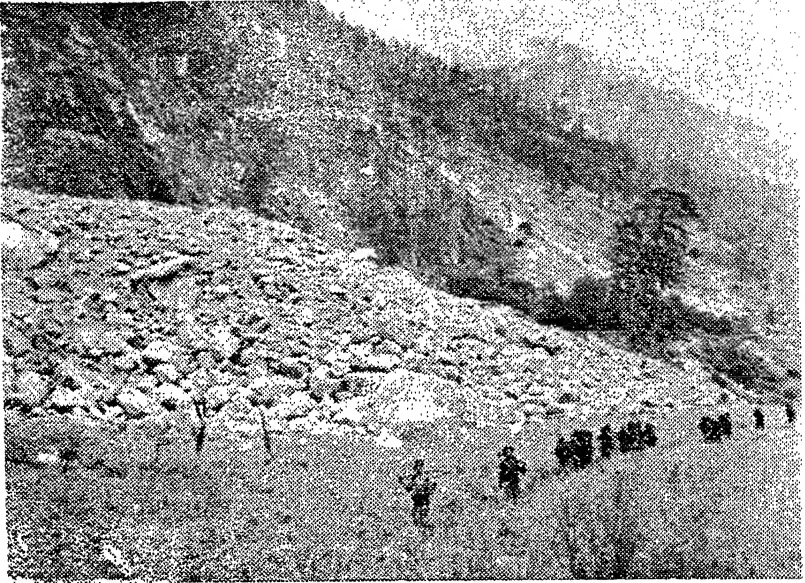
Mr. Durga Nath Gogoi, my office Assistant rushed to me and asked me what was wrong with me and I replied saying that I was alright and there was nothing to worry about. Numbers were quickly checked and, to our great joy, all members of the party were present except our porters, who had fled in all directions. We then moved to a place about 200 yds. along the main RIMA track and decided to spend the night there.

We made a fire and tended the four members who were seriously injured with whatever comfort we could give to them (although, as a matter of fact, none of us escaped injuries of some sort, though fortunately, not as serious as those of our four companions, whose condition was then very grave). Those seriously injured were—Dr. Goswami, Medical Officer of the party, Purna, the Medical Orderly, Rifleman Ran Bahadur Limbu, and my Naga servant Vilote Angami. Six of our Mishmi porters, including four women, came to join us and had also sustained some injuries. One of the girls was seriously injured on her head and still bleeding. There was no bandage except the shirt with which I had escaped. The back of the shirt was torn out, and a dressing improvised : this was applied to her head without any medicine.

The night was dark and gloomy, tremors continued every four or five minutes—sometimes even more frequently than that, and this together with the horrible noise of landslides and the continuous falling of boulders from all directions, shook everyone's nerves.

The injured persons were tended near the fire and a few clothes which some members had managed to grab as we left our camp were given to them. After staying about an hour or so the continuous falling of boulders became too nerve-racking and we shifted to a newly-ploughed Tibetan field about 50 yds. from our former position. We decided to stick to that place until the following day and not to move any more. We were tired and exhausted. We tried to get some rest by lying down on the hard ground which was neither attractive nor comfortable, but there was no alternative and we had to adapt ourselves to it and make ourselves as comfortable as possible by levelling the rough surface of the ground to find a suitable place to lay our heads.

It was not till 10.30 p.m. that I had the first opportunity to look at my watch. Smokers started feeling the scarcity of cigarettes and as obviously there was no hope of getting any, we were left with the few packets with which some of us had escaped. Although myself a smoker, unfortunately I did not escape with a single cigarette and had to share a little quantity of tobacco which my office Assistant, Mr. D. N. Gogoi, had managed to carry with him.



**Procession of Diphu Patrol Rescue Party, and the Kingdon-Wards with porters on the March from Rima to Walcng 9th September, 1950.
Capt. Sailo's Camp is buried under rockfall.**



Assam Rifles and D.L.C. cutting track through a landslide between Tilua and Mam rivers.

To add to the general misery it started to rain and it became impossible to remain in the open field. We then shifted our wounded persons to a small bush which we thought would give them some protection from the rain, but, unfortunately, it was a thorny bush and did not afford much protection, nor was it comfortable. We made another fire but it was frequently extinguished by the rain. To sleep that night, with the noise of falling boulders and tremors at frequent intervals was out of the question, so we sat down with heavy hearts and a thick dust in our throats waiting patiently for what the dawn would bring us. The night was uncertain and full of anxieties. Another big shock, we knew, would be sufficient to finish us on the spot. We talked about what might be the fate of our friends who went out patrolling to the DIPHU Pass and of another party on their way to WALONG. The night was long and the hours crawled by like years, and we wished that the whole tragic incident were a dream.

The rain stopped and a star or two appeared through the dusty atmosphere. This gave us hope and strength in our fateful night watch. The gloomy night passed on and more stars appeared in the sky over our heads. After a lapse of an hour or so the morning star was sighted and to our great joy dawn approached. As the light came, white patches could be seen on the hill sides and in few minutes the effects of the previous night's incident on the surrounding hills appeared in horrible shape which was beyond our imagination. The beauty of the hill sides on both banks of the Lohit river could no longer be discerned, for in place of pine trees and green pastures was nothing but bare cliffs and heaps of rubble. The whole valley could be seen horribly distorted. We turned towards our camp, but found no trace of it except the three tall pine trees one of which was badly smashed by boulders and the other two tilted and almost completely buried by landslides.

We went to the spot and picked up a few things, presumably blown down by the force of the wind. These were all light objects like pillows, hats, half-smashed cooking pots, buckets, and a few aluminium plates. To our great joy one small bag containing a few packets of Red Lamp Cigarettes (one of the cheapest makes manufactured by the Indian Peninsular Tobacco Company) and a pound of tea leaves was also picked up. These we valued as our great treasure and proposed to make the best use of them.

The Mishmis then appeared one after another and after my Mishmi Political Jamadar and Interpreter had made a thorough check, it was found that three porters were missing and presumably buried by the landslides. That presumption, unfortunately, proved to be correct.

Having nothing to eat or drink we assembled under an old pine tree to formulate a plan of action. Our next plan was to find a suitable camp site where we could get drinking water for the party. There was no water to drink. The Lohit river was muddy red and rushing furiously down littered with timber and debris. Practically all the nearby streams or rivers were either dried up or terribly muddy and the waters had a peculiar odour. Accordingly some open ground immediately south of the Tatu stream on the main track to Rima, and approximately three-quarters of a mile from our old camp, was selected.

The Tatu Stream had dried up like the others but fortunately we discovered a small spring quite close to the newly selected camp site, though it was barely sufficient for so large a party.

On arrival at the spot we found an old Tibetan from Sama village with tears flowing down his cheeks looking towards the direction of our buried camp. On enquiry it was found that two of his sons who stayed in the little cornfield above our camp were untraced and presumably buried by the landslides. He told us that the Tatu was completely blocked somewhere in its course and that our proposed camp might be flooded at any moment. Hearing the story some members of our party became disheartened, were afraid of another possible disaster and were in favour of shifting the camp site elsewhere. The whole thing was disappointing, but after finding the small spring below the camp it was decided that we should stick to that place and take shelter on a knoll immediately above our camp in case a deluge should occur.

Tired and exhausted after the dreadful, sleepless night we all assembled under the shade of a banyan tree and fixed our temporary home there, some drawing drinking water, some erecting camp shelters, and some reshaping half-smashed aluminium cooking pots with the aid of stone hammers. We made a fire and roasted a few Indian Corn cobs that we had collected. Each cob was divided into two or three parts so that

everyone should have a share for breakfast, with black tea without milk or sugar. However poor our breakfast may seem, yet we all enjoyed it and found it quite delicious and refreshing.

Our next task was to procure foodstuffs from the nearby Tibetan villages of Sama and Sangu. My Political Jemadar and Interpreter were detailed to go and were given a total amount of eighty rupees, which was all we had managed to salvage among the whole party. The sum was made up of sixty rupees found in my pocket, and another twenty rupees with Hav. Birkha Bahadur Sonwar.

In the afternoon, our messengers brought back with great difficulty about 4 seers rice, 5 seers soyabeans, and half a seer of salt, with a report that the chances of getting more foodstuffs were very remote as the villages were seriously affected by the earthquake and the villagers were camping outside on open ground like ourselves.

The villagers of Sama and Sangu expressed their deep sympathy and regret for their inability to help us as much as they would have liked, owing to the same misfortune. We realised their difficulties and thankfully acknowledged their gifts, however small they were. We then cooked our little stock of rice and mixed it with edible jungle leaves available in the vicinity of our camp, just to increase the quantity. We had our poor dinner, followed by the usual black tea. Our so-called plates and spoons were all improvised ones and the broken leg of a camp cot represented one of our big kitchen spoons !

The Lama Gaonbura of Tinai village and one man who left our camp in the morning to proceed to Walong returned with a report that it was too dangerous and risky to proceed beyond Tho Chu river (approximately 5 miles from our camp) due to the constant falling of boulders. So the whole idea of contacting Walong Outpost was dropped for a day. The same afternoon 10 Lai, a Porters from Walong area came and asked me for permission to return to Walong via Rima and try their luck on the East bank of the Lohit, but due to the danger and uncertainty of the route, I expressed my inability to allow them to proceed at that juncture. So we all stayed in the camp and shared our poor stock of rations.

As all our belongings were buried we had to manage with makeshifts. We had no clothing, medicine, food or any other

comforts of life. Due to the great scarcity of water, to have a bath was out of the question, moreover we had no soap, towels, shaving materials and other necessities. After our meal in the evening we retired to our common bed, which was the hard ground with a thin layer of green sungrass on top, but much more comfortable than the previous night. But to sleep was almost impossible due to the mosquitoes and sandflies which were a great trial in that camp, while during the day we had equal annoyance from Damdams (Blister flies) and horse flies which were abundant.

At daybreak on the 17th August, 4 men of the Assam Rifles, under the leadership of Rifleman Agam Singh Rai, volunteered to proceed to Walong inspite of all risks. I, therefore, wrote a S.O.S. message for transmission if Walong W/T Station had survived. The courage and self-sacrifice shown by these young soldiers deeply impressed me as I well knew they had a poor chance of reaching Walong alive with the constant tremors and falling of boulders on their 20-mile journey, which involved moving practically all the time over landslides. The 4 young soldiers took the message and cheerfully left us with our very best wishes for their journey.

The little stock of rations we had was rigidly controlled and the small quantity of rice was kept for our injured comrades. In spite of our careful management our stock began running out after the morning meal, (breakfast, or whatever it might be called) consisting of a share of a few ounces of fried soya-beans and a cup of black tea per man.

To try our luck once again Subedar K. B. Gurung and the Tibetan Interpreter Mr. T. Tsering went to Sama and Sangu villages to procure anything they could, to save us from starvation until we could get help from elsewhere. It was a brave gesture on their part to forget their own injuries and they had to limp a distance of 5 miles to Sangu and back under most difficult circumstances. As a result of their good efforts a quantity of food sufficient to last us two days on half rations was procured. Some commodities like chickens and gram had to be bartered for one or two articles of clothing which we could ill spare, but that could not be helped for our lives depended more on food than on clothing.

The same day my Mishmi Interpreter, Tarablum Yun, arrived with a little stock of rice, soyabeans, wheat flour, and

gram which he had procured at great risk to his life. He had actually sustained injuries to himself from falling boulders on his expedition. We were all delighted to get rations to last us for a few days at least, although there was not much chance of getting any more from the locality.

Our little stock of foodstuffs was again kept under strict control. Surely as far as strict food rationing goes, ours was the best system, as our whole stock was kept day and night under the pillows of the Procuring Officers, Subedar K. B. Ghang and Mr. T. Tsering.

To increase the quantity of our rations we luckily managed to get one goat and a pig, the flesh of which we preserved by smoking over a fire. We did not forget the villagers of Sama and Sangu, and gave them some of the meat in recognition of their kind help to us in our adversity.

On the morning of the 18th August the Lama porters came and reported that they would also try to get back to Walong and bring us any available rations. As they were worrying about their homes and families I thought it inadvisable to hold them up any longer and allowed them to go, with instruction to help the former party, if necessary. I again sent another S.O.S message to H.Qs asking immediate air dropping of rations for my party and the other two parties, one going to the Diphu Pass and the other party on their way to Walong. So, with the message, they left the camp with our wishes for their safety and luck. The day was hot and dusty due to the strong wind which blew from morning till late in the evening.

The days passed on with us waiting patiently and wondering what help would come from outside. To proceed further to the Tibetan village of Rima for rations was out of the question, for the Rima bridge did not escape and completely collapsed in the earthquake. Plan after plan was made to save the lives of the party which the Almighty had mercifully spared. To stay too long in our wretched camp was to starve to death, but to rush down to Walong with our injured persons would, in the existing conditions, have been suicidal. If Walong had not survived what would happen to our party which had rations only to last 3 days at half a meal a day? If the party proceeded to Tibet how long could it exist without money and living on local help? The journey from Rima to Chamdo-Lhasa-Darjeeling would probably take at least 3 to 4 months.

The food we had was only just enough to save us from immediate starvation. A seer of wheat flour mixed with green leaves and boiled with a few pieces of meat, stirred continuously with a broken camp cot leg, looked very much like what must have faced the Prodigal Son. The little birds that lived on the fruits of the banyan tree above our heads did not appear to worry about their rations as we did, and for persons on the verge of starvation it was not a pleasant sight to watch the crows that frequented our camp area, after they had been feeding on the half-buried body of a dead Tibetan only a few hundred yards from our camp. Perhaps they expected the same contribution from our party, but we hoped we would not have to give it.

After four days' pondering over all the pros and cons of a bold attempt to return to Walong—not forgetting our precarious food position—it was finally decided that the party should move from Tibetan soil back to India, preparing to die if necessary, in our own land, rather than in a foreign country. All preliminary arrangements for withdrawal being completed, the injured persons were asked to practice walking and to prepare themselves to move the next day at dawn. The condition of our injured companions appeared to be rapidly improving with the hope of returning to Walong although they were, as a matter of fact, still very weak. It was finally decided that the party should leave at dawn on the 21st August, and the members were fully aware of the many difficulties that they had to encounter on their 20-mile journey over hundreds of landslides.

After announcing the time and instructions, the party retired to bed waiting the dawning light of the 21st August. Some members were feeling restless at the thought of the big job lying ahead of us the next day and hardly slept that night. Some of them got up as early as 3 A.M. and started preparing our morning tea. All of us got up by 4 A.M. and packed up our kits so that each member, except the injured persons, should have a pack on his back. Like other persons who sustained simple injuries, I dressed both my injured knees and bandaged them with a piece of mosquito net and practised walking on the field to see if I should be able to move. After having some practice I found that I would be able to walk without much difficulty, but there was one doubtful point in my case, as I had no shoes, and it would probably not be possible to walk barefooted with my tender feet on the sharp broken boulders. To my great joy one Central Labour Corps porter kindly gave me his poor old pair of canvas

shoes which he said he did not require. That solved my problem and saved my life for a time.

As previously decided, the party left at 4.30 A.M. and moved down slowly towards our old camp. The sky was cloudy and the morning air was unusually chilly. When we came to our old camp we looked at the debris which covered and completely buried all our belongings; we kept silence with a lump in our throats and, gazing quietly at our ill-fated camp, moved away and started on our uncertain journey.

The journey was hard and dangerous. Tremors and the falling of boulders continued at frequent intervals and the party had to climb up and down the mountains over cracks and loose sandy soil. The hill sides being extremely steep, and almost vertical to the Lohit river in several places, we had to pass over many dangerous landslides on which heaps of boulders were found to be in readiness to roll down in hundreds with the slightest movement of another shock (and in some places this actually happened). The journey in such conditions was very trying and strenuous because one had to speed up on the hardest and most dangerous stretches to lessen the risk of bombardment from the cliffs above. Speed was absolutely essential.

To quote an instance of one difficult section. We came across a big landslide on our first day's march. The slip was about 700 yds. wide on a stiff cliff side and we had to cross it because there was no alternative route. While standing at one end and looking at the other end (which was hardly visible owing to the perpetual dust), one could not but wonder how so large a party could get across safely. We started. We walked, jumped, crawled, slid down, climbed up, down and up again, and several times fell down over heaps of boulders. Once in that difficult traverse the party had to wade thigh deep in the muddy water of the Lohit river which was rushing down furiously, carrying with it heaps of broken logs and debris. After a severe struggle which lasted for half an hour we reached the end of the slip with all our injured persons, who were partly carried and helped by other members of the party.

On our way, we came across some rivers which had dried up while others were in terrific spate, and we had to cross them one after another using all possible means we could improvise. Tired, hungry and almost exhausted, we struggled on towards our proposed camp, where we hoped to get water.

After passing through another big landslide which took us about 20 minutes, we rested for a few minutes. It was already 6-30 A.M., for we had to reach our destination before the wind came. We could not stay long and had to proceed without delay, for it was not known whether the Tochu river would be crossable or not. The river had been completely blocked for the last few days and might be in spate at any moment. So we moved on and reached high ground on the left bank of the river. We halted there for a few minutes and found three Tibetans approaching the river bank. At first we took them to be our rescue party, but later on realised they were evacuees from Chumprang village. We then moved down the bank of the river and found the bridge completely washed away. The river appeared to have resumed its normal course after being blocked by landslides above the crossing point. We, however, managed to cross the river by making an improvised bridge.

When we landed on the other bank we met the three Tibetans we saw from a distance. They were Sengi Lama and his wife and one woman who had lost her only nine-year old son on the night of the earthquake. They had left Chumprang village due to the food shortage there and they were proceeding to Rima to obtain foodstuffs. They had some cigarettes which they offered to us. We gladly accepted these which we needed very badly, but we paid them sufficient remuneration in cash for we knew that they would need it for procuring their food. We enquired about the condition of the track along which they came and learnt that we could proceed to their village although it might be very difficult to reach WALONG.

We then pushed on, risking our lives several times in the midst of falling boulders. With great difficulty we managed to climb over a spur over-looking our proposed camp. The lower track on the spur being washed away, we had to climb up to catch the alternative route which was long and steep.

While walking along flat ground below the slope, we heard a sharp long blast whistle which immediately drew our attention. We looked towards the direction of the sound and found one man signalling us to take the upper track above the landslides. We were overjoyed to hear the whistle as we thought it to be the first sign of our long-expected rescue party. We then climbed up the steep hill as directed by the man who signalled to us. The climb was unusually steep and we found it very exhausting,

and sweat flowed down our faces. We crossed a nullah and came to a small bit of open ground on the other side. When we came to the bank of another stream I found my Mishmi Interpreter sitting on the ground with his gun and leaning against his small cane basket. I asked him what had happened to him and he told me that he was too tired and could not move any further. I took his gun and cheered him up saying that there was only a little more to go and that we would soon be reaching the halting place where we would have our much-needed rest. I then carried his gun on my shoulder and let him walk on in front of me. We slowly moved down over the badly cracked hillsides till we reached our proposed camp where we met our first rescue party with rations, cigarettes, medicines and other comforts. We were overjoyed to see them and to hear that WALONG had survived, and that our S.O.S. messages had been sent to the H.Q.

We had real hot tea with milk and sugar ! A hot meal was being prepared with rice and dal in the dekchis and no sign of jungle leave ! What a wonderful change of fortune ! We even smoked our Red Lamp cigarettes in full instead of in halves ! For at one time to smoke a Red Lamp cigarette in full was considered a luxury and one had to be cut in two for economy and also to serve more members ! The rescue party was commanded by NK. Padam Bahadur Rai of No. 7 Platoon of the 2nd Bn. Assam Rifles. The weather was in our favour. The sky was cloudy and the valley wind did not blow. We thought it was a great opportunity to move on as experience had shown that the falling of boulders became less whenever the sky was cloudy and the wind stopped blowing. It was then 8-30 A.M. and we wondered if we could proceed straight to CHUMPRUNG village after having a substantial meal. All were tired, especially the sick people and those who had looked after them on the way. Many of us were anxious to move on to that village, but that would depend upon our wounded comrades. We had a conference and after consulting our patients it was decided that we should proceed after our meal, provided the wind remained calm in our favour.

We had our meal and the wind being unusually calm, we proceeded on to our next stage with lighter hearts. Just beyond our camp we passed through a bad portion, but not as bad as the two we had passed in the morning. Without much difficulty we reached the KRAOTI river where we found the wooden bridge

still in the air as to indicate that only one person could pass. Beyond KRAOTI the journey was practically a death march. I had a very risky and the landslides when the hills appeared as small ones were not really so. Landslides on the bank were found to be more dangerous than the hills and down from the high ranges because the rocks were so loose and the falling of boulders was so great. It was a desperate forced march and we had to continue till we reached our destination.

After climbing up and down for about one and half hours we came across one place where the river Lohit was blocked by big landslides and rocks. The effect of the earthquake on that spot was really tremendous. Practically the whole hill side of one craggy ridge about half a mile wide rolled down to the river along the height of not less than 9000 feet and built a big dam forming a beautiful lake of about 2 miles in length. How big the volume of earth came down and the force of the dust wind that swept over the other bank would be could hardly be imagined. Several trees on the other bank were uprooted and the maidan was just like a desert with thick sand. The maidan was quite big—approximately 500 x 300 yds in extent and very good for camping but had there been any soul camping in that maidan on that tragic night the thick dust alone that came down from the other bank would have been enough to suffocate him. It was near there that we came across a very bad portion where even a poor old owl did not escape and was hit and killed by a falling boulder. When in these dangerous areas we moved in small batches of 3 or 4 to avoid bunching up.

While we were moving over the most dangerous portions where there was every possibility of being hit by the constantly rolling boulders I realised that I was unconsciously humming a hymn —

‘Lead kindly Light amidst the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on”

When I came to realise that I was humming that particular hymn I thought it quite befitting to the encircling gloom we were then facing in our difficult journey.

With great difficulty we managed to reach CHUMPRUNG Camp at 2-30 P.M. on the 22nd and decided to halt there for a day to rest our wounded friends before venturing the attempt on the WAILONG hills which were reported to be in a very bad state.



The A P O's party return to Walong on 23rd August with all their remaining possessions



A Riflen.an helping Dr M C Goswami M O, Walong, after his ribs had been cracked by falling boulders

There we made our plan for the next day. On that day Jemadar B. B. Gurung, O.C., Walong Outpost, and party, arrived at our camp and brought with them rations and other necessities. The same day some volunteers were sent to improve the track and make steps and railings on the cliffsides which might be too dangerous and difficult for our sick men. It was decided in the evening, that, as the journey would be hard and dangerous, the party would proceed as far as the open ground above the Hot Spring about 3½ miles from our camp and stay a night there if necessary.

The next day we left CHUMPRUNG at 4:30 A.M. The weather was again in our favour. The sky was cloudy and there was no sign of valley wind. We moved hurriedly over many dangerous slides as before and managed to reach our first halt near the Hot Spring. We then prepared our morning tea and decided to move on to Walong as the weather was favourable to us.

After a few hours we began climbing the WALONG hill, following the old track as far as possible. When we had climbed for about 2000 feet from the river we found that it was no longer possible to follow the old track which had been completely washed away by a big landslide, so we then started climbing up towards the summit of a hill. The hill was extremely steep and there was practically no support except thin soft weeds on the hillside. While climbing up we depended mainly on our sticks to support us like mountaineers. In such a place one could not afford to make a mistake and every step had to be watched with care. Nothing stood between us and the Lohit so that one mistake would have been fatal."

As we climbed higher and higher the hills became misty and a drizzling rain fell. We continued climbing for a quarter of an hour without exactly knowing how high we were. The thick mist limited our visibility to some 20 yards. The extreme cold indicated that we were somewhere near the summit. After descending to the flat ground below we estimated that the height we had climbed must have been at least 4000 feet from the river, that is, to an altitude of about 8000 feet or more.

Thus, scrambling up and down many dangerous landslides and risking our lives several times on the craggy mountains, our party, including all the injured, arrived at WALONG safely at 9 A.M. on the 23rd August, in the midst of great rejoicing

on the part of our friends, who were anxiously waiting and praying for our safe return.

A thanks-giving service was arranged to be held the same evening at 7-30 P.M. to give thanks to Him who had saved us from a great disaster and to offer our prayers for the safety of other parties and our families at home.

On the 15th August the DIPHU Patrol, under Hav. Pahal Sing Rana, was camped in the jungle at the other Hot Spring, about two days' march from the DIPHU Pass which was their objective. After the shattering events of the 15th August the brave Hav. calmly faced the situation next morning, persuaded the reluctant porters to start, and forced his way up the valley under most hazardous conditions until he reached his objective on the 17th August. With his undaunted courage and great devotion to duty, Hav. Pahal Sing Rana fulfilled his mission and brought back his entire party safely to KAHAO. The DICHU Gorge, had been swept bare over several miles and for hours the party was under constant fire from the disintegrating cliffs above them. While stranded at KAHAO Village the party rendered invaluable help to the villagers in rebuilding their houses and repairing damaged irrigation channels. After finishing local relief work the party moved to the Tibetan village of RIMA where the bridge was being repaired for crossing to the west bank route of the LOHIT RIVER. An account of Hav. Pahal Singh Rana's experiences is given in Chapter VII.

After the DIPHU Party rescue work was over local relief work and the work of opening lines of communication started on a bigger scale. Three sections of Assam Rifles were employed to open the Lohit Valley track which was completely blocked from WALONG to CHANGWINTI.

Ever since the disaster of the 15th August the men of the Assam Rifles Outposts in this valley have been rendering excellent service, not only in rescuing their own men, but also in very greatly helping local administration by their relief work, such as improving damaged tracks, repairing the houses of the local people, constructing rope bridges for villages and repairing damaged irrigation channels for local cultivators.

I am glad to have seen all this personally, on the spot, and to know that the highest traditions of the Assam Rifles are still

being upheld. As one of the officers in charge of civil administration in this Valley I cannot but express my deepest appreciation of their excellent service, and say, "Shabash, Assam Rifles."

It would be an injustice to end this short account without mentioning one by one the brilliant achievements of certain individuals during and after the disaster.

To save the lives of the party stranded at McMohan Line Camp after the earthquake, a young Gorkha sepoy, 27502 Rifleman Agam Singh Rai, volunteered to proceed to Walong with three other volunteers, 28033 L/Nk. Man Bahadur Thapa, 28275 Rfn. Sun Bahadur Tamang, and 28386 Rfn. Padam Bahadur Tamang, to ask for a rescue party to come from Walong. This action involved the greatest risk to their own lives.

The credit for the excellent rescue operations for the Assistant Political Officer's party goes to 26776 Nk. Padam Bahadur Rai, 28022 Rfn. Kaily Tamang, and 28350 Rfn. Bhaktasamser Limbu; whereas credit for Major Khathing's party rescue goes to Jemadar Abirey Rai, and 28789 Rfn. Senglura Lushai.

The Diphu Patrol Commander, 25911 Hav. Pahal Singh Rana's great courage, leadership, and devotion to duty are unsurpassed, while the high spirit of discipline and obedience to the orders of a superior officer on the part of 26474 L/Nk. Jitman Rai, 27907 Rfn. Ram Bahadur Rai, 28294 Rfn. Ash Bahadur Gurung, 28307 Rfn. Rup Bahadur Gurung, 28323 Rfn. Bir Bahadur Ram, 28510 Rfn. Rajani Kanta Rai, and 28621 Rfn. Tabum Mara, deserve high praise.

The safe return of the Diphu Patrol and Mr. and Mrs. Kingdon-Ward and party, was due to the courage of 26047 Hav. Indra Bahadur Limbu and 28075 Rfn. Takem Abor, and 28169 Rfn. Emti Ao.

The calm and cool manner with which Sub. Kharka Bahadur Gurung handled the situation during and after the disaster, and the all-round efforts made by him for the welfare, safety and comfort of the party, with disregard for his severe bodily injury, is highly commended. The spirit of self-sacrifice displayed and the risks taken by 26593 Hav. Birka Bahadur Sunwar for the injured persons during the party's withdrawal to Walong is also worthy of praise.

The courage and devotion to duty of Interpreter Tarablum Yum (Mishmi) who tried his level best to procure food for the party after the disaster in the midst of great difficulties and dangers (even sustaining bodily injury to himself in his attempt), are beyond praise.

The courage and excellent rescue work of Sangjup Sakring and his thirteen Lamas throughout the whole rescue operation deserve great praise and recognition.

The invaluable services rendered by the Tibetan Interpreter Mr. T. Tsering, cannot be overlooked. But for his thorough knowledge of the area, his influence with the local Tibetans, and his fluent knowledge of the Tibetan language, the party would not have received all the help it did receive from the local Tibetans.

We owe much to Mr. and Mrs. Kingdon-Ward for their kind help to our starving patrol party while stranded at Rima. Meanwhile our deep sympathy goes to them for their inability to complete their ambitious research work due to the great disaster which shattered the route to the hidden treasure which the DI CHU river valley has in store for an enterprising botanist.

The last, but not the least, is the personal attention and trouble taken by His Excellency the Governor of Assam and other officers, both civil and Military, who left no stone unturned for our welfare and safety in the face of all difficulties, and who made the full extent of the disaster known to the Government of India ; not only for the badly affected people of these hills, but also for other areas as well.



CHAPTER II.

REPORT BY MAJOR R. KHATHING, M.C., M.B.E., ASSTT. COMMANDANT 2ND. ASSAM RIFLES.

15TH AUGUST, 1950.

THE previous evening it was decided that we should march off after performing the ceremony of saluting the national flag at Changwinti. We felt it our incumbent duty to show to the Mishmis that August 15th was the great day for all of them, too, by performing a Ceremonial parade and firing a few rounds of .303, as we had no crackers or blank rounds, to proclaim the day of Independence.

Accordingly at 0645 hrs. the whole party, including the Post personnel of Changwinti, fell in front of the Quarter Guard of 2nd Assam Rifles, Changwinti Post, and all Mishmi porters and villagers were made to line up along and around the perimeter of the Outpost. Just as the men were falling in and the Mishmis were taking their places, there were shouts, laughter and other noises, but as the parade was called to attention for the 'Present Arms' one could feel the silence and solemnity even among the Mishmis. This solemnity found its climax when a volley of fire opened the feu-de-joie. After the ceremony we started our march for Minzong.

We reached Minzong at half past one. The day was extremely hot and towards afternoon we felt very tired and decided to have a quick meal and retire early. At approximately 1940 hrs. as we had just gone to bed we heard a terrific noise resembling thunder. Next moment there was a great earth-tremor and Major Roy shouted "Earthquake, Earthquake," and everybody got out of the camp and collected in front of the hut. The Mishmis had no shed in this camp. They had dispersed in two places, some in the nullah next to the camp and others in the copse north of the camp in flat grassy

ground. The Mishmis in the nullah had a miraculous escape as its bank began sliding and huge boulders started to move. Some ran across the bridge to the open ground across the nullah, others rushed in absolute panic and fright to where we were. Those who were in the copse started running about helter-skelter and many of them began rushing towards the Hills north of the camp. With great difficulty they were persuaded to collect where we were. In the meantime huge landslides had started all around us. The hill in front and one across the Lohit River started crumpling down; stones crashing down on each other created fearful sparks and the whole place was one mass of dust. The scene gave the impression of a volcanic eruption. We checked and found all men, arms, ammunition and personal effects intact. With the exception of a few, most of the Mishmis had crossed over to the other side of the nullah. Those with us had suffered scarcely any injuries excepting minor bruises and cuts. After the first serious shock and while the tremors were still continuing, we decided that some of us should go across the nullah and the rest remain behind. The idea was that those who went across the nullah would look after the Mishmi Porters and the rest look after arms, ammunition, stores and the rest of the porters. We kept awake the whole night as the tremors and landslides had started all around us. The hill in front and two-fold fear of the Lohit River becoming blocked by the falling of the opposite hill and flooding our area, as well as the Hill north of the camp falling over us and burying the whole camp. In fact, big boulders were rolling down quite near us. Having appreciated our position we decided to leave the present site (Minzong) as soon as possible.

16TH AUGUST, 1950.

In this way the morning came. Tremors and landslides were still continuing and we realised the devastation that was going on all around us and the dangerous position we were in. The Mishmis in small batches came along to the camp from across the nullah. Those who were not injured collected their few belongings and disappeared from the camp. Those who were injured were treated by Major Roy from our meagre first-aid medicines that we had and in due course they, too, melted away.



Men of the Assam Rifles making a track near Walong, after the earthquake.



Men of the Assam Rifles marking a possible track near Walong.

Two courses were open to us.

(a) to force our way through to Walong.

(b) to withdraw to Changwinti and get in contact with Hayuliang W/T.

For (a) (i) we had three days ration in hand.

(ii) the track to Walong, as far as we could see from Minzong, was completely blocked and it was difficult to estimate how long it would take us to go through the hills, blindly.

(iii) all porters had bolted off and not even a guide was left to take us through the clefts and gorges.

(iv) all the rumbling sounds came from Walong side and it was presumed that the epicentre was somewhere towards Walong side. As such, the fate of Walong was very uncertain.

(v) even if we could succeed in reaching Walong in five or six days, and if the worst had happened to Walong, we should not be in a position to render any help.

For (b) (i) the original track was 9 miles only between Changwinti and Minzong. As such we could make our way to Changwinti at the most in 2 days.

(ii) there are sufficient rations for the Post for 6 months and these could last at least another three months even if all of us were added to their ration strength.

(iii) once at Changwinti we should be in a position to contact Hayuliang, the O.C., of which must be trying to find out the fate of his section at Changwinti.

(iv) once in contact with Hayuliang, I could get in contact with Walong, H.Q. Sadiya and Shillong.

(v) once in contact with Sadiya or Shillong, and if none has been established with Walong, I could re-organise the whole force and form a search party.

(vi) if in safe contact with Walong, I could instruct Walong to work forward to open the track between Walong and Changwinti.

(vi.) I could be in constant touch with H.Q.

We decided to choose the second course

Having decided to leave Manzonq for Changwinti we sent a patrol of 2 Mishmis to reconnoitre the track towards Changwinti. They came back and reported that there was a big landslide about a mile and half long with boulders still crumbling down, and there was no hope of getting across that bit. I would like to mention here that most of the Mishmis who had left us the previous night had luckily managed to cross this area before the landslide. I, therefore, with Rtn. Manohadur Rai, Assam Rifles, went for a recon up to the slide and found that if the boulders did not fall continuously, the area could be crossed though with difficulty. Beyond that point was more or less plain ground, as such, the danger of landslides was not very great. So we decided to send two O Rs (L Nk. Jagasingh, 6 Kumaon, and Rtn. Lal Bahadur Limbu, Assam Rifles) with a school boy, Chingtingsu, to make their way to Changwinti with a view to informing Changwinti that we were all safe, and to pass the message to Hayuliang, Walong and Sadiya. They returned without success. Having failed in this task, we decided to stay where we were until the tremors and landslides should subside a bit. We had at this time 3 days rations with us. Accordingly, we started constructing a temporary basha for ourselves.

While we were busy constructing the basha the school boy, Chingtingsu, came to us and asked for a message for Changwinti. He said that he, along with other Mishmis, would make another effort to get through to Changwinti over the hills. We gave him a message regarding our safety and instructions to Changwinti to send that message to Hayuliang, Walong, and Sadiya and intimate their safety or otherwise. They were also instructed to attempt to contact each other. The whole morning of the 16th was spent in building the bashas; and now we were faced with the problem of water supply. All the water in the river and nullah was dirty due to the landslides and was unfit for human consumption. After a lot of searching we found a pool in the rocks with three buckets of partially clean water. That, plus the water in our bottles, was all the water that we had. The most depressing factor was that not one Mishmi could be seen anywhere. At 1330 hrs. we had a meal of rice and wild leaves cooked as vegetables. About two hours later we saw a

Mishmi with his wife coming down the hill. This was most heartening as we thought they were coming to us, but they did not and after about half an hour they started climbing back with their belongings. We shouted for them to come to us but they would not. After a good chase the man was brought to the camp, but he posed deaf and dumb and we could not get much information out of him. After giving him cigarettes, tea and rice, he started talking and promised that if the gaonbura of the village on the top of the hill in front was still there, he would send him along to us. We let him go with some more tea and cigarettes. In the meantime, having considered his attitude towards us, we decided to send two Rfn. to trail him up to the top to bring in any other Mishmis who were there. However, on the Mishmis going over the hills we consulted the map and found that the main landslide could be crossed by making a detour over the hills and then coming back to the track, which passes through open ground. We could go from there through two small villages to Changwinti. Also, as the time now was 4.30 p.m. and the Mishmis who went in the morning had not come back, we knew that this route was a possibility. We knew that where Mishmis could go we could go also. As such, we decided to leave next morning with as many personal belongings as we could carry ourselves and make an effort to reach Changwinti.

Just at this time we saw four Mishmis coming down the hill followed by the two Rfn. sent by us. We found on talking to them that one was the Chaukidar of Minzong camp, another was a Gaonbura from near Wasung; there was also the deaf and dumb Mishmi who came to us during the day, and one more from across the river. With a lot of persuasion and offers of money, tea, rice, salt and cigarettes, the Chowkidar and Gaonbura agreed to accompany us to Changwinti. It was decided that we would leave all our ammunition and stores, excepting what we could carry ourselves, in charge of the Chowkidar. Accordingly we decided to start at 0500 hrs. on the 17th morning.

17TH AUGUST, 1950.

The whole night we had heavy rain, landslides and constant tremors. All of us were drenched as the roof of the basha we had made was not waterproof. In the morning we shifted all our stores excepting our rations and our packs to Minzong camp, but as we had a lot of ammunition we decided to leave

a guard. Rfn. Manbahadur Rai and Rfn. Jaganbir Chettri volunteered to remain behind. Hav. Pahalman Ale was also obliged to remain as he had burned his toe on the night of the earthquake and could not have made his way back. We decided to send back relief for them straight away on reaching Changwinti. At 0630 hrs. we started climbing the 7000 ft. high hill. Four Mishmis, including the Chowkidar, Gaonbura, one woman and child joined us as we reached the top of the first stage of the climbing where the Chowkidar had his house and fields, a portion of which had been destroyed by a landslide the previous night. His son remained behind to look after the house and also our stores at the camp.

We climbed to an altitude of about 5000 ft.; an extremely steep climb. Capt. Gupta started falling back. We left guides for him to bring him up. Roy and I were leading the party and had to cut our way through the thick jungle and grass and so could not wait for him. Time was an important factor as on reaching the top of the hills where the landslides had started we found that we had still a long way to climb in order to get the party clear of the danger area, and also as we did not know what was in store for us ahead. Having climbed another 2000 ft. over the saddle we cleared the area of the slide and started our down hill journey towards the original track. We kept another guide at this point to direct Gupta and the men we had left behind so that they might not lose the way. In the meantime we cut our way through the grass and, having crossed a few minor landslides, we came down to a comparatively safe place at the foot of the hill where there was drinking water from a spring. We halted there for Capt. Gupta and his party. Meanwhile two Rfn. (Rfn. Lal Bahadur Limbu and Rfn. Khuali Lushai) were sent ahead to Changwinti to inform them about our move. After waiting for about an hour and a half and just when we were getting anxious about Capt. Gupta the guides returned without him and his orderly. We learnt from them that Capt. Gupta had decided to return to Minzong camp and stay there until relief was sent. As there was no point in waiting further we made our way towards Changwinti. We crossed two major landslides which were pretty difficult going. After negotiating these, and while we were crossing the third slide, we came across a party consisting of Nk. Birjabahadur Rana and two Riflemen, with Kataki (Interpreter) of Changwinti, Chingtingsu (school boy) and two girls (Patsui and Tohenla)

cutting their way through the jungle as a relief for us. This was most encouraging as our men were tired and worn out and this cheered us all up. From them we learnt that Changwinti was safe. The only route to Changwinti lay through Sung village due to a major slide on the original track. There were also a few more landslides on the track to Changwinti, but all were negotiable. We made our way to village Sung and arrived at 1500 hrs. By this time we were dead-tired, hungry and thirsty. We could not bring any rations or utensils as we had to leave all our rations for the people left behind. We bought some Indian corn (Bhatas) from the Gaonbura in whose house we took shelter and made some tea with the little we had brought with us. We sent two Rukhmen to Changwinti camp to intimate to them that we would be reaching Changwinti the next day, and decided to spend the night in the Gaonbura's house. It is worth-while mentioning here that the Mishmis who accompanied Nk. Binja Bahadur's relief party from Changwinti refused to return to Changwinti with us saying that they would make their way through to Minzong and bring back as much of our personal effects and stores as possible, and try to bring Capt. Gupta and party back with them. All the time that we were on the move slight tremors continued. We had a most welcome and peaceful night's rest in the house of the Gaonbura.

18TH AUGUST, 1950.

We got up at 4 o'clock and made preparations for the move to Changwinti. Morale was excellent and the men looked cheerful. At 0500 hrs. we started for Changwinti. On the way we came across three major landslides, but they were all negotiable though with great difficulty. We reached Changwinti without any further incident at about 0845 hrs. After having rested for a while I went round the Changwinti Post to assess the damage. The camp itself was not affected at all except for the perimeter wall which had collapsed. There was a minor landslide north of the Camp from which a huge stone had knocked down one of the camp huts. None of the men, arms or equipment was affected. I found Hav. Harkabahadur Limbu in charge of Changwinti Outpost very cheerful and carrying on his work most efficiently. His bearing and cheerfulness had a profound effect on the morale of both locals and his own men. We found every one eager to help each other in opening the track or taking messages

from the Post to Hayuliang etc. His treatment of, and relations with, the local Mishmis was extremely good, as a result of which the Outpost is always crowded with Mishmis eager to do anything for the Assam Rifles. We noticed that some did not want any remuneration either. Apart from his efficient management of the post itself he had taken immediate steps to send a report of the safety of his men and Outpost, and of our party, to Hayuliang and Walong through his Dak Runners on the 16th August. He had also reconnoitred a portion of the track to Hayuliang. I feel this N.C.O. was handicapped by the small strength of Assam Rifles personnel at his disposal. If he had had more men he would have surely done valuable work towards the restoration of communications. The rest of the day was spent in collecting porters for Minzong to bring back Capt. Gupta and party. It was decided to send the party next day (19th Aug.) at 0630 hrs.

The party of Mishmis who were sent to Minzong the previous day returned at 1630 hrs. with small loads of our blankets and clothing.

19TH AUGUST, 1950.

Mohorir Babu Sherbahadur Rana of Hayuliang was at Changwinti. We found him extremely courageous, intelligent and full of initiative. We agreed to leave for Hayuliang on the 20th to establish contact. Accordingly we sent a party of 1 N.C.O. (L/Nk. Jugasing of 6 Kumaon) and one Rfn. and Katakhi Phenglam of Changwinti to find out the condition of the track and if Chawa bridge was still intact. At 1430 hrs. the party returned with the information that the Chawa bridge was damaged and that there was no confirmed news about Haile Bridge.

We had 18 shocks during the whole of this day.

20TH AUGUST, 1950.

Sent another recce party towards Hayuliang. Mahorir Babu left for Hayuliang at 0700 hrs. We gave him message for Hayuliang, Sadiya and Shillong. I decided to recce the hill while Major Roy treated the sick. The whole day was spent with the men playing indoor games in order to keep their minds off the constant tremors. We started a little competition game between ourselves and the men. At 1630 hrs. Rfn. Manbahadur

and Rfn. Jangbir arrived from Minzong and reported that Capt. Gupta's party was safe and they were moving in two stages instead of three and that they had reached village Sung safely. Most of our personal effects, excluding a little bedding and cooking utensils, were being brought by Capt. Gupta's party.

21ST AUGUST, 1950.

Got up very early as we could not sleep the whole night due to constant tremors and slides. We sent a Mishmi runner with a message to Hayuliang asking them to send out a contact party with information of their camp. I, with L/Nk. Dilip Singh of 6 Kumaon, went to receive Capt. Gupta's party on the way. Capt. Gupta and party arrived at 0915 hrs. They all needed rest very badly. Tea and cigarettes were distributed to all of them. The whole day was spent in interrogating the Mishmis coming into the camp and getting details of damage to tracks and also about the local casualties and loss of property amongst them. By this time money had lost all value with the Mishmis. The meagre vegetables, such as pumpkin or cucumber, brought by them had to be bartered for cigarettes, tea leaves, or salt. Occasionally we had to depend entirely on wild leaves and stems or creepers for vegetables.

22ND AUGUST, 1950.

Surveyed new site for the camp as the present camp site was neither tactically sound nor had it enough space. Besides, it did not command a good view of the track in front. Apart from this the hills north of the camp had cracked and there was danger to the Outpost. On my way I found Menkong and Chendun villages in a most dangerous condition and their inhabitants running away. Fields had disappeared due to landslides and the hills above the villages were crumbling down. By this time we had become quite concerned about Hayuliang and Walong as we had had no message from them. Roy and I discussed the matter and it was decided that one of us should go to Hayuliang and contact Sadiya and Walong through the W/T and appraise them of the situation as we knew it. So it was decided that I would leave with 1 L/Nk., 2 Rfn. and five Mishmi porters the next day. Major Roy and the rest of the party were to leave Changwinti on hearing from me. We had five moderately severe shocks that day.

23RD AUGUST, 1950.

It rained during the night. Early in the morning I prepared to go to Hayuliang and another party prepared to go to Minzong to bring back the rest of our belongings. The Mishmis refused to go with me to Hayuliang due to the rain, and as the shocks and landslides were still continuing around us we could not instil enough courage into them to undertake the journey with me. It was decided that I should leave the next day if weather permitted.

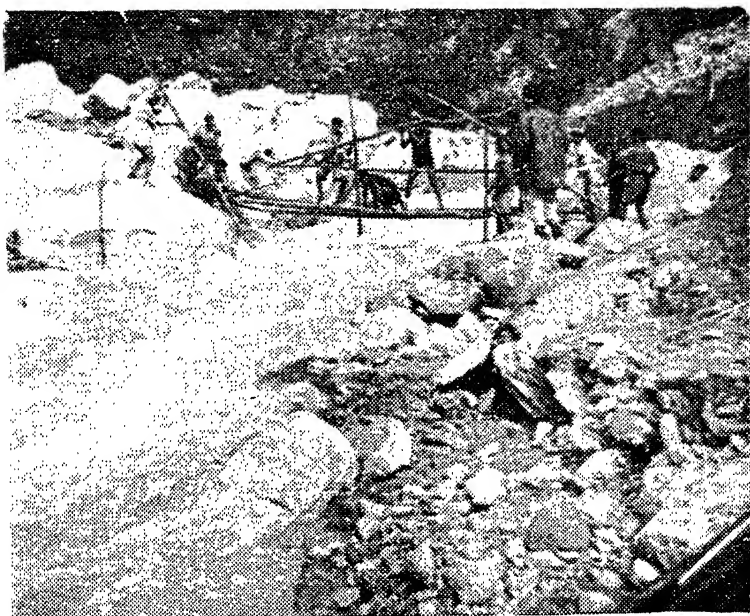
24TH AUGUST, 1950.

At 0745 hrs. I, with one N.C.O., 2 Rfn. (Assam Rifles) and five Mishmis left for Hayuliang. We were joined by two girls whose homes were near Hayuliang. The sky was very heavy and it started raining at 1200 hrs. On my way I met the Dak runner with another school boy with a message from O.C. Hayuliang Outpost stating that the W/T at Hayuliang had been out of order since 11th August and that he had no news of Sadiya, Theroliang or Walong. This was a great blow to me as we were now completely cut off from the outside world. I, however, pushed on to Hayuliang.

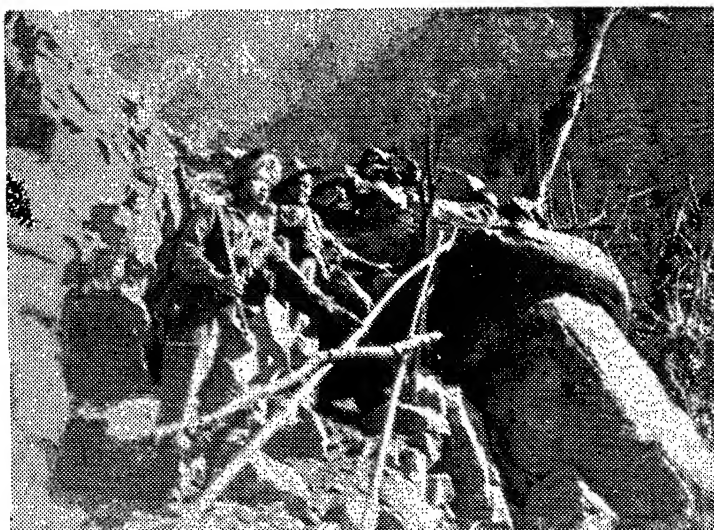
The track right through was in a most dangerous condition due to landslides and falling trees and branches. After walking for about 10 minutes from Changwinti on the old track we came across a landslide of approx. 25 yds., then after about 100 yds. another fairly big landslide of about 400 yds. long. It was difficult to negotiate the slides as misjudging a foothold by an inch meant goodbye for good, down to the river 2000 ft. below. But the most difficult one was a small landslide of about 10 yds. only where we had to go down 100 ft. on all fours and climb up again to get to the track. Not very far away from this we found a good resting place with clean drinking water.

After having rested for 15 minutes and refreshed ourselves with the cool water we started marching on again with daos and khukries in our hands. About a mile from this resting place we came to a landslide about 30 yds. long which was impossible to negotiate, so we had to make a diversion over the hill, climbing 1000 ft. and down again to get to the track.

We arrived at Chawa bridge which was reported by Mishmis to have been damaged. The suspension bridge was



Assam Rifles & D.L.C. making temporary bridge over Tilua river.



Route to Walong after it had been made negotiable.

intact. It is 55 yds. in length and there is no fear of it collapsing in the near future. Just near this bridge a landslide had taken place over Mishmi fields where 5 men were killed instantaneously and one fatally crushed by the boulders. Three men miraculously escaped. I would like to mention here that all these slides were still active and we had to dodge the falling boulders as we came across them.

We arrived at Munglang camp at 1330 hrs. Though the water-point of the camp was a bit too far for a tired traveller the camp site itself was quite safe from landslides.

21TH AUGUST, 1950.

Munglang to Yadong—14 miles.

We started for Hangam camp at 0530 hrs. The track, though very badly damaged by slides, was not so difficult as the first day's journey, but as we had to cut our way through the fallen trees and branches we took an enormous amount of time. Added to this, the springs and small hill rivers had dried up, and we suffered extremely from lack of water.

Just before entering the Haile bridge a landslide had taken place, but the track was not completely blocked. Haile bridge was still quite safe and there was no fear of its collapse or of its being destroyed by any landslides. From Haile the track winds upwards to a climb of 2000 ft. to Tila Hills followed by a descent of about 800 feet to Kymbang maidan where there are plenty of wild lemons.

Then again a steady climb to Hoton from where a gradual downward journey takes one to Halong river. We reached Hangam camp at 1200 hrs. and found it intact, though mithuns had become owners of the camp and all over it we saw heaps of mithun dung. Anyway, we could have cleaned the camp and stayed there for the night had it not been for the water problem. We would have had to draw drinking water from the main river which was unfit for consumption. I therefore decided to move on to Yadong. On the way we found the Ull bridge 55 yds. long, partially damaged. The only way to get across was by clinging to the bridge steel ropes and monkeying a way across singly. This we did, but it took a lot of time. Arrived Yadong camp at 1530 hrs. The camp had only one hut standing and all of us had to crowd into this basha as it was

raining. The camp had a terrific loss over drinking water. The old spring at the camp used to get its water supply had dried up and no drinking water was available in the vicinity. After a lot of searching we managed to discover a spring just by the side of the Loma River about 400 yds. on the south east of the camp hut.

26TH AUGUST, 1950.

Yadong to Hayuliang—9 miles

At 0730 hrs. we started for Hayuliang. We were late in starting as the previous night we could not draw drinking water.

This part of the track had not been badly affected. After passing through a fairly easy path through elephant grass we came to Hla nullah from where we started taking a path cut through cliffs to Su S'char and thence to Kasaipani. The zig-zag track through the side of the cliff had become more difficult as a result of landslides. Anyhow it would not take long to restore this part of the track. After Kasaipani we came to an open maidan (Laonung) about 2 miles long. In places the ground had opened into big gaps several feet wide and had suffered subsidence at other places. Reached Hayuliang at 1100 hrs.

On arrival at Hayuliang, I found the following —

- (1) Damages to the camp site—
 - (a) Perimeter gone and being repaired
 - (b) Hospital, kitchen, Katakis and porters' huts collapsed,
 - (c) Inspection bungalow, servant huts, Sub-Overseer's hut, N.E.F.A. store hut damaged. The ground around the above buildings had subsided about 5 feet below the original level at various places and the whole place was in a most dangerous condition.
- (2) The Sub-Overseer had made no attempt to do any kind of work to open the track on either side of Hayuliang and was frightened to death.
- (3) The Dak runner had been sent to Tezu on the 18th with the full report of the camp but no action had been taken. I gave immediate orders to send a party

of one Hamman (Hr. Tekbahadur Chhetri) and two Rifemen with two British guides to make their way to Sadiya by any possible route and inform them of the situation.

During this period Roy remained at Changwanti arranging for porters to bring the party out. Roy became quite a popular doctor with the Mikonis and all who came to the camp seeking medical relief. He was thus kept occupied treating them with the meagre medicine he had at his disposal. Also, he had been able to collect much information about the track towards Walong and the condition of the surrounding villages which he passed over to me at Havuliang.



CHAPTER III.

REPORT BY 2ND BN. ASSAM RIFLES : SADIYA.

AFTER a crowded programme of Independence Day celebrations, Sadiya was preparing itself for a well-deserved rest. Most women and children had already retired. In the J.C.O's Mess the Officers and J.C.Os of 2nd Bn. Assam Rifles had assembled to propose a toast to the prosperity of the Republic. Only the music from the Brass Band broke the serene stillness of the evening.

At about 7-45 P.M. the serenity and darkness of the evening was shaken by an earthquake of unprecedented intensity unleashing its fury and devastation for five full vicious minutes. Everything around us seemed to be tossing, swinging and crashing. The earth around the lines opened out at many places and yellow warm water gushed out in torrents through the openings and crevices with a terrifying noise, flooding the camp. The temporary buildings started crashing down and permanent brick walls cracking and falling. In the distance there was the terrific noise of miles of hills crashing down with deafening sounds while the suffocating dust that filled the air added to the terrifying scene.

For several seconds nobody knew what was happening, and, stunned by the pitilessness and suddenness of nature's fury, bewildered men, women and children rushed about in the darkness in search of shelter from the flood and collapsing buildings and crashing trees.

When the tremors started abating and imagination could comprehend the devastation and its consequent confusion, the Officers and J.C.Os rose to the occasion and rushed to sound the alarm bringing the situation under control. They went round untiringly, marshalling panic-stricken groups of men and women to the undamaged Drill shed, reasserting order and



H.E. inspecting temporary barrack constructed by men of Assam Rifles at Sadiya.



A.R. constructing temporary bashas at Sheoliang (new camp site of Theroliang).

instilling confidence. The whole area was immediately cordoned off and pickets and patrols were posted to guard all Govt. Offices, the Treasury, and Govt. and private property. Intermittent tremors still went on. It was only after midnight, when the panic had been controlled and all safety precautions taken, that the Officers went to their own billets to see the damage down there.

The Assam Rifles Lines at Sadiya suffered cruelly. Fifty Family Quarters had been severely damaged or rendered unsafe for habitation. Five temporary barracks collapsed and many more buildings badly damaged. All Outposts reported damage of varying degrees to buildings and property. At Riga the whole camp had collapsed. At Denning all the buildings either collapsed or were severely damaged, and a new stream cut through the camp dividing it into two. Debris of devastated hills and enormous logs came floating down with the fast current.

The entire Camp at Walong was destroyed. Six men had been slightly injured and some stores destroyed. All the buildings at Pasighat had been damaged. No casualties from amongst the men of the Assam Rifles was reported from any Outpost.

On the 15th of August, there were three Assam Rifles' parties out. An Assam Rifles Party under Subedar Kharka Bahadur Gurung accompanying Capt. Sailo, A.P.O., Lohit Valley, was camping near the MacMohan Line. The whole Camp came under a landslide and the party was rendered without clothing, arms, ammunition, food or shelter. Three porters were lost. A second party under Major R. Khathing, M.C., M.B.E., was trapped at MINZONG with only 5 days rations. Another patrol under Havildar Pahal Singh Rana was cut off in the Dichu Valley on the North-Eastern-most corner of India with limited rations. Separate accounts of each party are given elsewhere.

This was the damage to the Assam Rifles, but the havoc caused to the hills, roads, tracks and locals is indescribable. In several cases complete ranges of hills slid and crumbled down into the valley blocking rivers, diverting some, bringing down along with the debris complete villages with all the cultivation and live stock. Rivers were temporarily blocked and then as the dams burst all the debris and floating vegetation came down flooding the plains and bringing unimaginable and untold devastation and suffering. With all the highways damaged

beyond immediate repair and all roads, tracks and paths cut off and obliterated by the earthquake, we found ourselves cut off from the rest of the world and from each outpost or Detachment away from Sadiya.

And thus the 16th of Aug. dawned on us. In some miraculous way the best in every one seemed to rise to the surface. All were infused with the spirit to put forth every ounce of human effort to alleviate the sufferings of the dying and to do everything possible to help the terror-stricken inhabitants of the little explored hills, and the masses in the plains.

It was the Assam Rifles who had first explored these Mishmi and Abor Hills and they have always had the sole privilege and duty of defending these from foreign aggression. They and their forerunners are the only people who have contacted and mixed with the tribals inhabiting these hills for the last few decades. It was probably this latent love for the hills and its peoples that sprang in every heart at that tragic moment. At every Outpost men automatically offered medical relief, shared their food with the loca's, set about opening tracks and finding out the fate of nearby villages and other outposts.

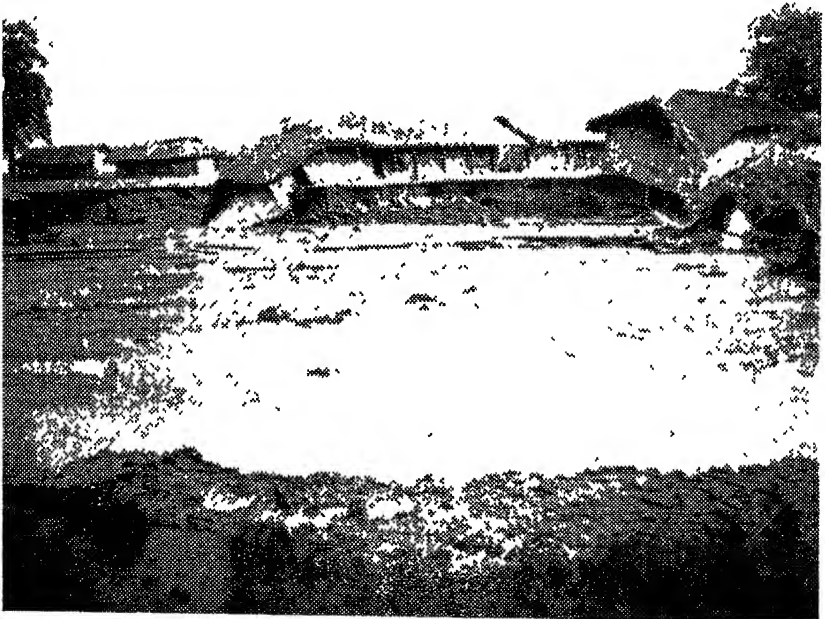
At Sadiya, within 24 hours 50 temporary family quarters and necessary accommodation for all others were built. Buildings at every Outpost were repaired or reconstructed and made safe for habitation. All available manpower in the Outposts started work on tracks in a frantic effort to link up with other Outposts and the plains so that relief could be rushed up.

Riga platoon had rations only up to the 10th October. As all routes were cut off and there appeared to be no hope of opening up the tracks or supplying more rations by any other means, the platoon was ordered to withdraw to Pasighat leaving a few men behind to look after the collapsed camp and heavy kit, reserve ammunition, etc. The historic march of the platoon, under Jemadar Deshbahadur Limbu, without rations for 7 days through constant tremors and hill slides will always stand out as an example of endurance.

Due to the complete disruption of communications between Sadiya and the rest of Assam, the ration position of the whole town and Assam Rifles became acute. Assam Rifles had to cut down their rations to give a loan to the political officer for relief purposes. Air Force Dakotas started dropping urgent



H.E. Shri Jairamdas Daulatram and party wading through three feet knee deep flood waters on Nizamghat Road 20 Oct. '50.



Sadiya. Affect of erosion caused by receding flood water 21 Oct. '50.

supplies by air, and meantime we put our men on to repair the roads. As the old Ferry Ghat had been badly damaged and silted up, a new road approximately two miles from Sadiya to Pahukhowaghat was opened. On the south bank of the Lohit 200 Riflemen were put to repair 500 yards of the worst affected portion of the Saiknowa-Dhola road, and about 300 yards of the Saikhowa-Betoni Road. This linked Sadiya once again to the rest of Assam by road.

Similarly 11 miles of the Sadiya-Nizamghat road, several miles of Sadiya-Tezu, Pasignat-Kobo, and 2 miles Saikhowa-Pangdoi road were repaired by the men of 2nd Bn. Assam Rifles.

Airstrips at Sadiya, Pasignat and Kobo Chapri were prepared or put into commission with the help of locals and the landing of planes made possible.

As the good news about the safety of all three of our missing parties was received, and SHABASH from H.E. and the Press started coming in for the heroic efforts of the Assam Rifles, the morale of the men rose ever higher. Several risked their lives and showed utter disregard for their personal safety or comfort in collecting data about damages, and in opening up tracks which made the planning of relief measures possible. It was again through them that relief in the way of food and clothing was distributed to the tribals in the interior.

On 21st October, H.E. Sri Jairamdas Daulatram, the Governor of Assam, accompanied by Mr. L. Sharma, Political Officer, Sadiya, Lt.-Col. H. S. Sandhu, Commandant, 2nd Battalion Assam Rifles, Sadiya, Major K. S. Behl (Staff Officer), I.C. of Assam Rifles, Shillong, and Mr. C. E. DelaNougerede, Executive Engineer, N.E.F.A., left Sadiya for the inspection of the Nizamghat Outpost. When the party had gone 30 yards beyond Deopani River, it was found that a portion of the road and bridge had been washed away by rain on the previous night. The party then waded through water 3 ft. deep for a distance of about 40 yds. and started on foot towards Nizamghat leaving all the vehicles behind. The road was submerged at various places but the party continued wading to get through as far as possible. On reaching Kerimgaon, it was observed that the river Dibang was in spate and had flooded the area on its east bank after breaking the bank. The water was rising rapidly and the current of the water was rushing towards the east at a speed of about 3 to 5 miles per hour. All villages were under

water and in immediate danger of being washed away. The water continued to rise in height and spread over the whole area. The road between Jijapani and the two bridges was completely submerged under 3 to 4 feet of water and there was a very strong current gushing towards the east. As it was impossible to proceed further, H.E. decided to return. The party was compelled to come back wading in the rapid current and chest deep water. H.E. leading the party. In the meantime, one small country boat from Deopani and two dug-outs from the village of Jijapani met the party and five were rescued. Then the whole party with the Assam Rifles escort reached Deopani. The current of the river Deopani was also flowing rapidly upwards due to the water of the river Dibang rising and feeding it. A few men and cattle at Deopani were immediately rescued and moved to a safer area by the orders of H.E.

All the vehicles—one Land Rover, two 15 Cwt trucks and 5 jeeps left at Deopani in making an effort to get out towards Sadiya were caught by the fast current and were completely submerged. Only the Land Rover was moved to a safer place through the vigorous efforts of the driver.

Elephants were then brought up to push all the submerged vehicles out of the water. All the available transport of the Assam Rifles HQ with two Officers and one platoon were rushed to Deopani area to remove all submerged vehicles and rescue as many villagers as possible.

The river Lohit was also in spate, and on the morning of the 21st October, the water level had risen to 3 ft. A one engined Mar-Boat was taken away by the current and the Sadiya-Saikhowa crossing rendered useless.

Then unprecedented floods overlook Sadiya on 21st October beginning at 1930 hrs. Half of the town area came under water which rose 3 ft. to 4 ft. in several of the buildings. Two Bungalows of the Assam Rifles, the Executive Engineer's Bungalow, the Education Officer's Bungalow, the Inspection Bungalow, Educational Institutes, North East Frontier Agency Offices, the Political Officer's Bungalow and offices, all N.E.F.A. Staff Quarters, the Divisional Forest Officer's Bungalow and various other buildings were flooded. The water was gushing at terrific speed and spreading towards the unaffected areas. Pahukhowa, Bazakgaon and Bhatigaon villages were all under



Commanding Officer's (Assam Rifles) Bungalow at Sadiya under flood water of the River Lohit.



Assam Rifles constructing a 'Bund'

water. Approximately six hundred people were evacuated under the most trying conditions. Refugee camps were established and food, etc. for the refugees also arranged. As the Inspection Bungalow was not safe, H.E. decided to shift temporarily to the 2nd Battalion Assam Rifles Office at half-past ten at night. All the Assam Rifles personnel, Civil Officials and volunteers were mobilized to carry out the rescue operations. An effort was made to cut a channel so as to divert the water to the Lohit river and save the rest of Sadiya Town. Two hundred Assam Rifles personnel worked with the help of torches, lamps and Petromax Lamps, but as the water was rapidly rising the digging was rendered impossible, and the effort was abandoned at 0300 hrs. on 22nd October.

During the night, Refugee Camps were organised by the Commandant, Political Officer and Major Behl (S.O. to I.G. Assam Rifles, Shillong) and four thousand refugees were evacuated to these camps. The camps were functioning properly by morning and every refugee provided with food by the first light of day.

On the morning of the 22nd October Sadiya airfield was also flooded and the water over-shot the road and started flooding the unaffected Assam Rifles Lines. Immediately 300 Assam Rifles personnel were engaged to make an embankment and stop the water from flowing into the lines. Different channels were also dug to divert the water from the airfield to the main affected area and to speed up the outflow of water into the Lohit River.

Early on the morning of the 22nd H.E. again shifted to the Dak Bungalow and relief operations were started under his personal control.

His Excellency visited all refugee camps and personally saw all relief and rescue operations.

At about 10 A.M. on 22nd October, the flood water started receding after having found its way to the Lohit River, causing tremendous erosion all along the North bank, and west of Sadiya town. The relief operations started in full swing. One platoon of Assam Rifles was employed in cooking and feeding the refugees in various relief camps from midnight 21st October to 3rd November. As there were no cooking and feeding utensils available, every Assam Rifles man loaned whatever utensils he possessed until necessary utensils were airdropped. About

4. REVIEW OF THE WORK DONE BY THE ASSAM RIFLES

50 Riflemen under Major A. C. Sharma were deputed to carry out rescue and relief operations in the villages of Deopani, Jijapani, Karimpani and other villages along the Nizamghat Road on the east bank of the river Dibang. The base was established at Dikranggaon— miles along the Sadiya-Nizamghat Road. About 350 persons trapped by the floods and found on roofs, rafts, bridges and highlands were rescued. The rescue work was carried out in ordinary country boats and dug-outs, which entailed a certain amount of risk. Other villages affected by the floods, although safe, but cut off from Sadiya, were given rations for one month. These operations were successfully concluded on 3rd November, 1950.

Reconnaissance parties sent out on the 22nd morning spotted two places from where the Gurmura river was flooding the affected area. Immediately about a hundred men under Capt. Talukdar were deputed to make an embankment along these gaps to stop the water coming to the affected area.

Receding floods started tremendous erosion near the Assam Ply Wood Factory and the whole Factory was in immediate danger of collapsing. 60 Assam Rifles personnel were engaged in dismantling the factory and shifting the parts to a safer zone. Another 100 men in the meantime constructed a road to help removal of the heavy parts by vehicles.

Immediate steps were taken to construct machangs for storing relief rations and of bashas for sheltering refugees at Sadiya. Approximately 100 mds. of cut paddy was salvaged and hundreds of cattle were rescued. Every possible help was given to the villagers of Pahokhowa village in salvaging their household and other goods.

The floods receded, came again, and again receded. Earthquake tremors continued at less frequent intervals and were milder in intensity. Landslides did not cease. The monsoons have been treacherous. Rivers have been changing their courses and often flooding their banks. Fresh miseries have befallen the peoples of Assam and no one can accurately foresee the future. But the undaunted and selfless spirit with which the men of the Assam Rifles worked and served, directly or indirectly, the people of the hills, has won their respect and affection and will have a far-reaching effect on the progress of administration in these areas. It was worth any sacrifice and is something we will always be proud of as this in itself has been one of the glorious achievements of the Assam Rifles.

CHAPTER IV.

REPORT BY 5TH BATTALION, ASSAM RIFLES, LOKRA.

THE earthquake of August 15th, fortunately did not affect us badly in Lokra, but as the tragic news came pouring in from our sister battalion in Sadiya we tried to do all we could to send in the much needed equipment, food supplies and money. As communications had been so badly disrupted this in itself was an almost impossible task. However, we contributed in cash, sent our signallers and their equipment, rubber boats, tele-cables etc., wishing all the time that we could do more.

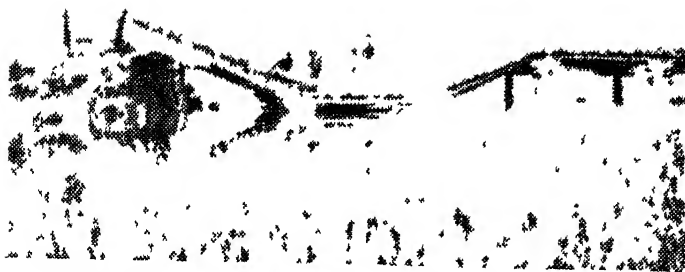
But our turn was to come next when Lokra experienced one of the heaviest downpours we had even known, turning the whole camp into a vast lake. Under the able leadership of Major B. S. Gurung the evacuation of personnel, arms, ammunition and other valuable property was promptly carried out. As the water receded we realised that even though our own camp had only suffered slight damage all approaches to Lokra had been badly affected. Practically all the surrounding bridges whose foundations were either upset or loosened by the earthquake were washed away by the strong floods. The communication machinery was completely put out of gear. Leaving the entire burden of restoring communications on the shoulders of the local P.W.D. was asking too much. We stepped forward and took to constructing bridges and roads. This was accomplished with great speed and seven bridges were constructed in twenty days—this remarkable achievement was the result of a burning determination to be of use to our fellows.

This was not an end but the beginning of a noble task that was to be entrusted to my Battalion. The Subansiri river just to the east of us had run amuck and played havoc with the people and villages of the Subansiri plain. Capt. H. B. Limbu led a small force of picked and keen men and rushed to North

Lakhimpur with the object of rescuing the marooned, starving and terror-stricken people. The river had played them a treacherous game.

Capt. Limbu also lost no time and headed straight for Pathalipam, the worst affected area. The odds against him were heavy. Badly shattered communications, non-availability of sympathetic porters, the broken disheartened people and above all and most annoying the inclement weather stood in his way. He battled against these odds and arrived in Pathalipam on the 3rd September, thus covering an otherwise unassailable distance of 20 miles in two memorable days. He was later joined by another sister force from an Army Unit and a handful of Police. Having established their HQ at Pathalipam they found that the real need of rescue work was on the other side of the river. Difficulties arose in obtaining country boats and Miri boatmen bold enough to ferry the party to the other side. No one was prepared to take the risk. The river was in full fury and spate, the course was uncertain and the river was full of floating timber. The O.C. Army Rescue Party decided to wait for a better occasion to make the crossing. This could hardly be accepted by Capt. Limbu. He declared his intention to make a bold attempt and got hold of a couple of country boats and took to the river. The struggle to reach the other bank could be imagined.

This party formed the spear-head of the Rescue operations and were the pioneers of it. Rations, clothing, medicines etc. followed. These were collected, controlled and distributed to the suffering people by the Assam Rifles. Parties were then sent out to Bardoloni, Gogoimukh, Nepalikhuti etc., and they contacted the marooned people, gave them hope and flashed necessary information to HQ. Rescue Party. The signallers' work was outstanding. This went on for about a month and at the end of it nearly all the villagers had been rescued, provided with adequate rations, clothing and medical help. The Assam Rifles Force was split into parties and these were stationed in other main centres of distribution. They helped the civil officers in obtaining all necessary supplies and saw that perfect peace and order were maintained. This was most essential for the smooth running of these difficult operations. The civilian officers were so widely deployed that it was well nigh impossible for the administration to function without the



A bridge damaged by floods in Tezpur District.



Assam Rifles constructing Singhmari Bridge in Tezpur District.

active help and presence of Assam Rifles. They formed the vital cog in the machinery. Capt. Lumbu with his determination and devotion to duty, played a big part in it. This Officer played with his life. He was once nearly drowned in the river; but his will to survive and presence of mind rescued him from the very jaws of death. He came out of the river, cheerful and smiling, remarking "The water was luddy cold underneath."

While all this was going on, another Force, under the inspiring orders of the Inspector General of Assam Rifles, was organised and sent to Pathalipani. The object of this 100 strong force was to organise relief for the rescued people, construct bashas for them and help them in raising crops. The force, after having been properly equipped to suit the occasion, arrived at North Lakhimpur on 26th September, 1950. From there they proceeded to Pathalipam and were confronted with the same difficulties as regards communications. The road was severely breached at two places and the M.T. column was held up. It took us two days to erect the broken bridges and we were through. This opened the eyes of the local P.W.D. Officers!

We arrived at Pathalipam on 28th September. The sight of the skinny children, pale and sickly men and women, all herded in an unhealthy bit of jungle, was most pitiable. They needed regular supplies of food and decent shelter immediately. The capacity of the Assam Rifles were put to the test again. In a short period of a month and a half eighty-eight bashas of all sorts and sizes were constructed. This was at the rate of two houses per day. The men took it all with a smile, and worked night and day. The desolate dreary spot that we saw a month ago was humming with activity. The people were once again busy and cheerful. We could not have felt happier. It was a service—selfless and meritorious, rendered to the people of Assam. The flag was kept flying higher and still higher, and we felt like saying,

"Yes. A Marathon Race Well Won."



CHAPTER V.

REPORT BY CAPTAIN H. B. LIMBU, 5TH ASSAM RIFLES. "RESCUE WORK IN NORTH LAKHIMPUR."

UNDER a warning order from the Inspector General of Assam Rifles I was detailed to proceed to North Lakhimpur for Relief and Rescue Work. I left my H.Q. accompanied by 1 J.C.O. and 12 O.Rs by mail bus on 30th August, 1950. Due to the bad condition of the road we did not arrive at North Lakhimpur till the next day.

At North Lakhimpur we had a joint conference in which the following points were discussed :—

- (a) Line of Communication between North Lakhimpur and Pathalipam.
- (b) Transhipment of rations etc. for Rescue Party etc.
- (c) The work to be handled by Relief and Rescue Party.

The S.D.O. North Lakhimpur, S.D.P.O. North Lakhimpur, Army Officers, one Assam Rifles Officer and others attended this conference.

After this Conference, along with a handful of keen men I proceeded to Pathalipam, the key and nerve centre of the devastated area. The route leading to Pathalipam was by no means easy. The major portion of this road was badly washed away by the floods and was segmented into raised and submerged stretches. It meant wading through waist-deep water and mud. Hesitation was natural but the urgency of the moment and the touching appeals for help were too strong for any shirking or stepping back.

We struggled through to Pathalipam, arrived late at night and made ourselves as comfortable as possible on the wet earth and prepared for the next day. Throughout the whole night

we could hear the maddening roar of the furious Subansiri from about a distance of 3 miles away.

The damp and cloudy morning brought the news that the river could not be crossed. An armada of rolling logs had filled up the river which was unusually swift and the waves were foaming and high. None was prepared to take us across. This was a great and crushing disappointment. Ghastly stories of the starving and sickly population from the other side of the river kept pouring in. This made our stay at Pathalipam anxious and difficult. "We must get on to the other side" was our fervent prayer.

The next day we moved to Chauldhoa with a faint hope of crossing from there. Pitiable stories kept coming in. We got hold of some boats there and promised to pay the frightened and reluctant boatmen a handsome amount. By God's grace, we reached the other bank and were immediately surrounded by a swarm of pale and half-dead people and wailing children.

The villagers had been living on the verge of starvation. But for the selfless and gallant efforts of neighbouring tea planters, we might have lost the entire population. Utilizing their two mono-engined planes and a motor boat they dropped supplies and food and kept the starving and doomed population alive. Much credit goes to them. They were the real pioneers.

Arriving at Baligaon we opened up our W.T. Set and started flashing across signals, indicating our demands and difficulties. These were promptly answered. We made a Dropping Zone here and the soaring I.A.F. Dakotas were seen in action. Food and medical help started coming in abundance. With this, new spheres of activity were opened up and extended to cover many a marooned village.

Life returned. Cheerfulness began to appear on the bony faces of the tiny children and the haggard old. With the arrival of a medical unit and the Marwari Relief Workers, the place was buzzing with activity. In Baligaon alone, 4000 men, women and children were being fed and looked after. And this was only one of the many affected villages. Thousands of people were being inoculated daily against cholera, small pox, etc. This speedy return from conditions of starvation, disease and despair to the buzzing activity of normal life has probably not been witnessed before in the history of Assam.

Later on we also helped the various Societies and Missions in the execution of their humanitarian task. These were the Marwari Relief Society, the Rama Krishna Mission, and the Kashibiawanath Sewasamiti.

To cover up the vast area under floods the following centres had to be opened up :—

1. Baligaon Centre
2. Gogamukh Centre
3. Bilmukh Centre
4. Bordolani Centre

Assam Rifles Rescue Parties were distributed in all these centres and they helped the Local Authorities in controlling and distributing rations, clothes, medical aid, etc.

On the fateful morning of 21st October, 1950 I went to Pathalipam to meet Lt.-Col. H. R. Sharma. We held a meeting and I expressed my desire to go back to Baligaon. The sky was set with dark and woolly clouds and the river was by no means kind. The waves were rolling up, and rising higher and higher, threatening the very banks of the river and throwing a mighty challenge to the strong and tried sinews of the Miri boatmen. "Shall we plunge in or put it off till another day"? "But would there be another peaceful day"? "What if something should happen in my absence? They are entirely dependent on me. I must go at all cost, danger or risk." I accepted the challenge. I was a non-swimmer. I got into the boat and with a push of a bamboo the boat was rocking in the river. I had two more Riflemen with me and we were altogether seven including four boatmen. With a confident and indomitable air, we proceeded.

After about half an hour, we were right in the thick of the foaming river. We were trying to face the full might of it with calmness, which is what an Assam Rifles man must do in conditions of peril.

Then suddenly, without warning, one mighty and rebellious wave threw our boat high and turned it virtually upside down. It was filled up with water, but we managed to keep it floating. But the hand of destiny was not satisfied with this. Next moment I was thrown out of the boat. The next moment, I was washed away from the rest of my comrades. But fortunately one of them, an old man with great presence of mind, threw a

bamboo towards me. I held on to it with all my strength. But the waves would not have it. I kept sinking and swallowed quite a lot of water. I could hold no more. I thought my end was near. But I maintained my struggle for life and survival.

Suddenly to my great fortune, I felt some sandy solid earth touching my feet on which I landed. I could wish for nothing more fortunate. My other comrades had given up all hope of my survival, as they themselves were in great danger. I yelled at them, exhorting them to struggle and bring the boat somehow or the other near me. They needed to be galvanised into action and again it was the old man who steered the boat and brought it up to me and later on took it along the bank about three miles down to the scheduled place. We bailed the water out and brought the boat to Baingaon. The whole affair was unbelievable. Life and death had exchanged hands so quickly and so suddenly, that it left the mortal wonderstruck. But for that doddering old man, I would not have been writing this to you.



CHAPTER VI.

EXTRACT FROM PATROLLING REPORT BY HAV. PAHAL SINGH RANA ON DICHU PASS.

- 15.8.50** We rested at GARAMPANI and repaired the bridge. There are two springs which are linked with DICHU river. We took our bath in the spring water. On the same night at 1945 hrs. earthquake tremors were felt. With all my men and coolies I went quickly to an open space and warned the party to be careful. After a while we saw big trees and stones falling on our camp. We spent the night in very great anxiety and did not sleep.
- 16.8.50** We halted two days at GARAMPANI because the earthquake had caused big landslides in the surrounding areas. We surveyed the area in order to go forward and repaired the route and bridge which were damaged due to the earthquake.
- 17.8.50**
- 18.8.50** We left GARAMPANI for JAMMU at 0700 hrs. I started for DIPHU halving my load. Tracks were not so good. TAKEN and KASTURI available between GARAMPANI and JAMMU.
- 19.8.50** We left JAMMU for DIPHU PASS at 0700 hrs. The track runs alongside the DECHU river. The track is better than the 2nd stage and along both sides of it there are spacious lands about 200 to 400 yds. wide. TAKEN and KASTURI were also available. Reached DIPHULA PASS and crossed through this area. It was noticed that many kinds of jungle flowers were blooming on both sides of the track from JAMMU to DIPHU PASS. On arrival at DIPHULA PASS, I made a thorough reconnaissance of the area. There was no village in this area. Found 6 old camps at the plain area of the DIPHU PASS



25911 Hav. Major
PAHAL SING
RANA, who carried
out his orders in
leading a patrol up
to the Diphu La
after the earth-
quake and brought
all his men back
safely to Rima and
Walong.



28075 Rifleman **TAKEM ABOR**
who greatly assisted Mrs.
Kingdon-Ward on the march
back from Rima to Walong
in September.

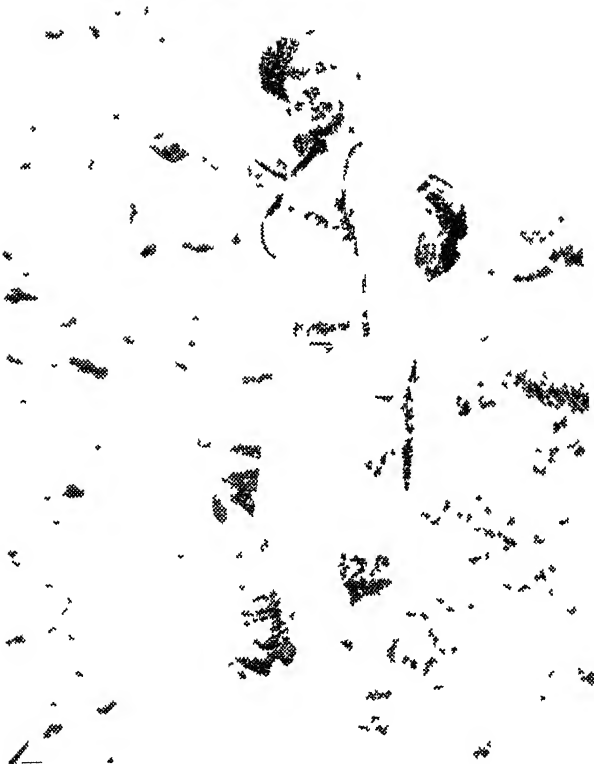
—asked Headman THAMA LAKA about those camps and learnt from him that Tibetans come from CHHERENGBA in the months of June and July to search for a medicine called ZETUK and this they sell to CHINA @ Rs. 25/- per seer.

- 20.8.50** Went 4 miles beyond the DIPHU PASS with 3 sepoy and Headman THAMA LAKA MIAR, and made a satisfactory survey of the area. So we reached up to the Burma Tibet Border. We had to cross about 3 miles over snow during the journey. We found 3 deep lakes, each about 1x2 miles approximately in width. There are no trees or vegetation. The height of the hill seemed about 16,000 ft. I returned to my camp after the conclusion of my survey.
- 21.8.50** The track coming from the North of DIPHU Camp through CHHRENGBA was surveyed. This track touches the border along a distance of 3 miles. Alongside with this track, a river passes and loses itself in the DECHU river. Horses and mules pass by this way and Tibetans also come in June and July in search of medicines. This information given by the THAMA (Headman), Dhup also available there. All these things are available on our own side of the border also, and are taken away by Tibetans as there is nobody to stop them.
- 22.8.50** Arrived SIMTHA camp on 25.8.50 from DECHU stage by stage. The journey up to KILLANG Camp was performed with great trouble, because all tracks were blocked by the landslides started by the earthquake and big stones kept falling over the area. I with the jawans and coolies could only cross this area with great difficulty, making tracks ourselves. After marching a few miles we halted for the day. We all rested there that night and could not cook any food owing to the non-availability of water. We faced a great deal of hardship. The coolies CHEKSHERMİYAR, EPIMIYAR and Headman THAMA LAKA showed great courage, otherwise without their help we would have had to return to India via RIMA. Facing these difficulties we arrived at KAHAO on 27.8.50 and halted there. I met the villagers,

- 29.8.50 We started out to find out the route for MISHEI-
 30.8.50 Kharo but no constructed route could be traced
 & A water carrier was constructed after two day's labour,
 31.8.50 as we were without water
- 1.9.50 We left Kharo for RIMA at 0700 hrs. On arrival at
 RIMA, Mr Kingdon-Ward with Mrs Kingdon-Ward
 came to meet us and they were very pleased to see us
 They camped at RIMA together with our party. Due
 to a blockade on the route we halted there for 4 days
 After making a bridge we started for WALONG. Mr
 Kingdon-Ward told me that it would have been diffi-
 cult for them to reach India if our party (Assam Rifles)
 had not arrived in the meantime to help them.
- 7.9.50 I left RIMA for SANGU at 0700 hrs. On the way Mrs
 Kingdon-Ward was suffering from fever. So she was
 carried by Rifleman TAKEM ABOR and Rifleman RUP-
 BAHADUR GURLING. We camped at SANGU.
- 8.9.50 We left SANGU for SAMAR at 0700 hrs. There was no
 bridge on the river SAPHUNG. So we crossed the river
 making an artificial bridge. After we had marched
 two miles, Mrs Kingdon-Ward again began to feel
 feverish. My jawans had to carry her and also helped
 Mr Kingdon-Ward who had become weak on the diffi-
 cult march. We camped at SAMAR.
- 9.9.50 We left SAMAR for DUNAI at 0700 hrs. Track was a bit
 better. We crossed river THOCHU and HOROTI making
 bridges. On arrival at DUNAI we camped there.
- 10.9.50 We left DUNAI for TAYEP at 0700 hrs. on the same day.
 We could not reach WALONG as the tracks were blocked
 by big stones due to the earthquake and there was a
 heavy wind blowing from 1100 hrs. on that day. So we
 camped there for that night.
- 11.9.50 We left TAYEP for WALONG at 0700 hrs. and arrived
 WALONG at 0930 hrs. on the same day. On arrival there
 I gave my full report to the A.P.O. Lohit Valley.



26017 Havildar **INDRA
BAHADUR LIMBU** who
led the Rescue Patrol
sent to find the Diphu La
Patrol and the Kingdon-
Wards.



Subadar
**BIR BAHADUR
GURUNG, O.C.**
Walong, Direct-
ing road repair-
ing operations.

Extract from Mrs. Jean Kingdon-Ward's letter dated 12th March, 1951.

"I suppose the whole story of what they did in the Lohit Valley is now known, but it is impossible to convey in mere words what it meant to force a way down from Walong to Changwinti after the earthquake, and having walked out after the 'improvements' were fixed, I just cannot understand how Subedar Bir Bahadur Gurung's party got through in the first instance. Nor do I understand how Hav. Pahal Singh Rana, caught at the Hot Springs half way up the Dichu gorge, managed after the earthquake to get a party of fifteen right up to the Diphu La Pass at its head, and back again to Kahao and Rima without losing a single man, load, rifle, or anything else. They worked in worse than war conditions, and their courage and determination were magnificent. I am sure that this played an important part in maintaining the morale of the tribal people, who at one time were very despondent. As for ourselves, it was a unique privilege to have been in such company at such a time, and in spite of everything we have the happiest memories of our five weeks stay in Walong during September and October, where we made many friends at that distant Outpost."

Extract from Mrs. Jean Kingdon-Ward's letter dated 16th November, 1951.

"The journey back from Walong to Teju was no worse than we had anticipated, but it was pretty trying all the same, and extremely terrifying in some sections. The Assam Rifles made an excellent job of the new track, and without their wonderful help the journey would have been almost impossible. I never realised, until we had to use that track ourselves, what a grim ordeal it must have been at the beginning. No praise is too high for Sub. Bir Bahadur Gurung and his party, who when they forced their way down to Changwinti in late August, had no fixed gallery across the precipices, and must therefore have been for hours on end under fire from the cliffs above. The Walong-Changwinti section will never be anything but a

nightmare, but at the beginning it was all but impossible to get through at all. I assure you we felt it a privilege to be with such a grand crowd."

Extract from Mr. F. Kingdon-Ward's letter from Walong.

"In this context we would like to express to you our thanks and admiration for the invaluable help given us by the N.C.Os and Other Ranks on the difficult and dangerous journey from Rima to Walong, especially the indomitable Havildar Pahal Singh Rana and Havildar Indra Bahadur Limbu."





The Diphu La patrol, Rescue Party and the Kingdon-Wards and party reach Walong on 11th September, nearly four weeks after the earthquake.



**Crossing the Tho Chu by temporary bridge, after the earthquake.
On the road from Rima to Walong.**

CHAPTER VII.

COMPLETE LIST OF DONORS TO EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUND.

1. Commandant, 4th Battalion Assam Rifles, Imphal	. Rs.	3,501/-
2. Commandant, 5th Battalion Assam Rifles, Lokra	.. Rs.	3,200/-
3. M/S. Kulwanta Rai Prem Chand Jain	... Rs.	2,001/-
4. Inspector General of Assam Rifles (Private Fund)	.. Rs.	2,000/-
5. Commandant, 3rd Battalion Assam Rifles, Kohima	. Rs.	1,723/-
6. Commandant, 2nd Battalion Assam Rifles, Sadiya	. Rs.	1,225/-
7. Commandant, 1st Battalion Assam Rifles, Aijal	Rs.	1,153/12/-
8. M/S. Baejnath Kisturchand, Sadiya	. Rs.	1,001/-
9. M/S. Dhanraj Chatursen Jain	. Rs.	1,001/-
10. M/S. Chotalal Seth & Co., Silchar	.. Rs.	1,001/-
11. M/S. P. B. Dass & Co.	... Rs.	1,001/-
12. M/S. Cooper Allen & Co., Kanpur	.. Rs.	1,000/-
13. M/S. Mahabir Prasad & Co.	... Rs.	501/-
14. M/S. Goenka Engineering Works	... Rs.	501/-
15. M/S. B. Thanawalla & Sons Ltd., Bombay	. Rs.	501/-
16. M/S. Standard Batteries	.. Rs.	500/-
17. Sri Chinmoy Bhattacharjee	... Rs.	251/-
18. M/S. Kerr Knitting & Co.	... Rs.	251/-
19. Mankumar Guha	... Rs.	201/-
20. K. Budi Singh	... Rs.	151/-
21. M/S. East End Mercantile Co.	... Rs.	101/-
22. Parsuram Kanu	... Rs.	101/-
23. Arabinda Dutt Choudhury	... Rs.	101/-
24. M/S. Dayab Chand & Co.	... Rs.	101/-
25. M/S. Bharat Leather Works	... Rs.	101/-
26. Colonel R. N. D. Frier, M.C.	... Rs.	100/-
27. M/S. Dewar's Garage & Engineering Works	... Rs.	100/-
28. M/S. Jamnadas Boolchand	... Rs.	100/-
29. M/S. Panchunga & Sons	... Rs.	100/-
30. M/S. F. Harley & Co.	... Rs.	100/-
31. M/S. New India Manufacturers Corporation, Calcutta	Rs.	100/-

32. Staff Officer of the I.G.A.R.	..	..	...	Rs.	70/-
33. Sri J. K. Chakravarty	.	...	...	Rs.	51/-
34. Sheik Mohd. Halim	...	..	...	Rs.	51/-
35. M/S. Gen Sup & Co.	...	...	..	Rs.	51/-
36. Sub. Bahadur Gurung & Sons	...	...	...	Rs.	51/-
37. N. B. Nag	..	..	...	Rs.	51/-
38. Major K. S. Behl	.	...	...	Rs.	50/-
39. Baejnath Sohanla	...	..	..	Rs.	50/-
40. Sri Jagesh Chandra Dey	.	..	...	Rs.	50/-
41. M/S. Climax Brush Works, Calcutta	..	...	...	Rs.	50/-
42. M/S. Surajbhan Radhakishon	...	..	...	Rs.	50/-
43. M/S. Khan Motor Works, Shillong	...	...	...	Rs.	50/-
44. C. Patia	..	...	..	Rs.	50/-
45. M/S. B. R. Gurung & Co., Ghoom	..	.	...	Rs.	25/-
46. M/S. Hrang Ghunna & Sons, Aijal	..	.	...	Rs.	25/-
47. M S J. S. Balwant Singh & Sons. Sadiya		.	...	Rs.	20/-

 Rs. 24,514/12/-

COPY.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SHILLONG

October 11, 1950.

My dear Frier,

It gave me very particular pleasure to receive cheques to the value of Rs. 22,510/- being the amount collected for the Earthquake Relief Fund through the efforts of your Headquarters and which you have sent to me on behalf of yourself, your officers and men of the Assam Rifles. All of you deserve hearty congratulations for the response made to the needs of the situation. The Assam Rifles have throughout the Earthquake operations behaved in such splendid manner that I consider it a matter of privilege and pride to be associated with them. I was glad further to learn that more contributions also are likely and will be forwarded to me.

In view of the fact that the Assam Rifles themselves have suffered so much during the earthquake and would need substantial amount for relief, I propose to earmark the amount received from you for relief work among the Assam Rifles and it will be available to you for such use.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- JAIRAMDAS DOULATRAM.

COLONEL R. N. D. FRIER, M.C.,
Inspector General of Assam Rifles,
SHILLONG.



MAP OF

ASSAM

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